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LOUIS XIV

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

NAPOLEON AND HIS COURT
JOSEPHINE, NAPOLEON'S EMPRESS
VICTOR EMMANUEL II AND THE
UNION OF ITALY

A PAWN AMONG KINGS
THE PAID PIPER
PAYMENT DEFERRED



LOUIS BY THE GRACE OF GOD
OF FR'NCE AND NAVARRE THE MOST CHRISTI'N KING

LOUIS XIV

KING OF FRANCE AND NAVARRE

BY
C. S. FORESTER

WITH THIRTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS



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* *From Photographs by Lévy et Neurdein, Paris*

LOUIS XIV

CHAPTER I

HEREDITY

HIS arrival had long been looked for and anxiously awaited. Four ruling houses contributed to his immediate ancestry; his four grandparents represented the Bourbons, the Medici, the Spanish Hapsburgs, and the Austrian Hapsburgs. His paternal grandfather was Henry IV—Henri Quatre—Henry of Navarre, direct descendant of Saint Louis and of the Counts of Foix, hero of a hundred fights, victor in a hundred diplomatic squabbles, father not only of his people but of a numerous and strangely assorted family. His paternal grandmother was Marie de Medici, niece of Ferdinand, Grand Duke of Tuscany; niece also of the unspeakable Francesco de Medici; whose ancestry ran back by devious routes through Medici and Sforza and Visconti and Este, blotched with the worst horrors of the Cinquecento. She it was who had grasped the Regency of France on the assassination of her husband and had held it for a dozen years with the aid of her compatriot the Maréchal d'Ancre, and who had yielded it with a bad grace only after d'Ancre had been killed while resisting arrest at the Louvre—at least those who killed him said he resisted arrest.

On his mother's side his ancestry could be traced through a series of marriages and intermarriages among the Hapsburgs. His maternal grandfather was Philip III of Spain, that gentle, weak, formality-ridden nonentity who had received from his father the burden

of the Crowns of Spain and the Indies, along with the enmity of France, England, and the Netherlands. Through Philip III the line ran back to Philip II, blond, immensely painstaking, conscientious, devout, unimaginative; by two routes through a marriage of cousins to Charles V, in his day the greatest man in Europe, and beyond him through a lunatic princess to the older dynasties of Castile, Arragon, and Burgundy. His mother's mother was Margaret of Austria, sister of that Emperor Ferdinand whose accession coincided with the beginning of the Thirty Years' War, and Hapsburg on both sides also.

So that Louis was one quarter Bourbon, one quarter Medici, and a full half Hapsburg, and the hot and passionate blood of Henry of Navarre and of Lorenzo de Medici was diluted in his veins with the cautious, tainted blood of the Spanish royal family. Of Philip III it is reported (doubtfully) that he died of the heat of a brazier which could not be removed owing to the absence of the court official within whose sphere of duty lay its removal. That may indeed be doubted, but it seems perfectly likely that he went through life from the cradle to the grave without committing any worse than venial sin. Comparison of this record with that of Henry IV will tend to show that Louis was bound to be a curious mixture, and to thinking people of the period it must have been a matter of desperate interest to discover which characteristics of his various ancestors were going to be most prominent in his personality; to discover whether they would display themselves alternately in a vacillating and hesitant individual, or selectively in a strong one, or whether they would blend into a neutral, dull, uninteresting whole; or whether indeed the theory of heredity was not nearly as simple as this might imply.

The Bourbon-Medici strain was inherited to an equal degree by Charles II and James II of England ; the Spanish by the effete and helpless Kings of Spain ; the Austrian by the vigorous later Hapsburgs. Louis's cousins, indeed, occupied thrones on every side, but the Spanish line and the English line and the Austrian line were all doomed within the next century to be continued ignominiously only through some attenuated female descent.

Yet, when Louis's four lines of royal descent had been brought together by the marriage of Louis XIII with the Infanta Anne in 1615, a very considerable spell of time was to elapse before the height of their achievement was to be attained. Louis XIII and his wife were mere children of thirteen years of age, but despite this fact France and Spain and the Pope, to say nothing of the Protestants of Europe, were burningly interested in their potential posterity. No one could ever forget that Louis XIII's father was an ex-heretic, or even worse ; that he was the man who said, " Paris is worth a mass," and that he had fought the Catholic League for a dozen years. Marie de Medici's orthodoxy was undoubted, so that Louis XIII was in safe hands—but the Bourbon line depended for its continuity only upon Louis and his brother, and expectation of life for children in those days was small. Should they die without heirs, the inheritance would pass to the house of Condé, also tainted with heresy, and, more important still, without any links by marriage with the Most Catholic King. The marriage of Louis and Anne had been the result of painstaking diplomacy which would be entirely nullified should no children be born of the marriage, or should the marriage be set aside, as was quite possible, until it should be consummated. We find the Papal Nuncio

writing repeatedly to the Pope regarding the progress of the young king's affections. A marriage alliance between the two most powerful Catholic States of Europe was of course one of the matters of deepest interest to His Holiness.

On the day after the wedding Marie de Medici produced evidence from the nursemaids of the two children that the marriage had been consummated, but this evidence can be set aside on various grounds ; the motive for the perjury being, as has already been pointed out, the necessity for making the marriage indissoluble.

Certainly, after that date, young Louis XIII displayed a distressing lack of interest in his wife. He was a shy and moody boy, with a passion for hawking, and not all the pressure his mother could apply, nor the jeers of his tutors, could force him into any closer relationship with her, for five years. But at the end of that time the urgings of the Duke de Luynes bore fruit, and the Papal Nuncio was able to write a cheerful letter to Rome saying that the much-desired consummation had been achieved. The Spanish Ambassador wrote to the same effect ; the news flashed round the court ; the House of Condé was depressed, and the Catholic half of Europe, newly plunged into war with the Protestant half, was spurred on to fresh efforts.

For a space Louis XIII forgot his hawks and his hounds ; he forgot his distaste for women, and lived normally and as happily as was in his power with his wife. Soon even more gratifying news was being passed round, and France was looking forward to hailing a new Dauphin when disaster occurred. Anne of Austria miscarried as the result of an accident, early in 1622.

And by now many things had occurred. The Maréchal d'Ancre had been killed ; his wife had been executed for witchcraft. Marie de Medici had withdrawn from the government. Richelieu had captured the young king's moody favour and had climbed to the highest position in the state. He had flung all his ferocious energy into the scale on the side of the Crown. Nobles and Huguenots and Parliaments had in turn felt the weight of his displeasure, but no single section of this opposition had yet been entirely crushed, and any one of them—even the Huguenots—might possibly receive the support of Spain.

The Queen was known to be corresponding with her family, with her brother the King of Spain and her cousin the Regent of the Netherlands. She was known to be subject to the influence of the intriguing courtiers around her. Even in all innocence she might be, to say the least, indiscreet in her correspondence. Richelieu decided that the correspondence must stop ; the Queen refused to allow any interference with her private concerns. Richelieu brought the King over to his side, as usual. The opposition to Richelieu seemed at once to have found a nucleus in the Queen, and the slender ties uniting the pair were broken.

For these ties had always been slender. The King was a very reserved, sullen young man, who displayed singularly little interest in anything at all. Hawking made a certain appeal to him, and soldiering rather less ; women seem to have had no attraction for him whatever. He cast the cares of the State on to Richelieu's willing shoulders, and retired within himself into a moody reserve, leaving the Queen to her own devices. It was certainly a course which meant little trouble to him, but it was hardly the one most likely

to hasten into the world the future Louis XIV, whom the Catholic world was awaiting so anxiously.

The Queen, on the other hand, was a high-spirited woman, obstinate and proud, yet nevertheless with a soft spot in her heart for good-looking men who treated her tactfully. There were plenty of those to be found about the court, and, filled with resentment as she was at her treatment by the King, it seemed likely that the rift between the royal pair would be permanent.

Yet Richelieu was able to wring some advantage even out of this situation. Since the birth of a child to the King seemed indefinitely postponed, the heir presumptive became of greater importance. This was Gaston, Duke of Orleans, Henry IV's younger son and Louis's younger brother, who had likewise survived the perils of infancy and was now of age. Some part of the opposition rallied round him instead of round the Queen, and a divided opposition meant no opposition to a diplomat of the skill and vigour of Richelieu. He was able to devote himself to his task of breaking down Huguenots and nobles; Louis could lead his army against Rochelle; and Anne—Anne was left without influence or interest, to the tender mercies of Buckingham and other gallants.

For fourteen years she was so left. Buckingham came and went; at Amiens he had wooed her passionately and openly. All that could be said of Anne was that in public she permitted the wooing. No one knows all that happened in private, but it seems quite certain that Anne was faithful to Louis, in her fashion. Buckingham returned to England, to raise new forces with which to attack Louis and Richelieu, but fell to Felton's dagger before he could achieve anything. Other lovers took his place, and sighed and wrote verses for the dangerous prize, but none of them ever



LOUIS XIII

gained it. Not even Richelieu's spies, the best in Europe, could ever find or even manufacture any definite evidence against her. Time dragged on, heavily for her.

For Richelieu and the King, on the other hand, it passed like a flash. Rochelle had fallen, thanks to Richelieu's irresistible energy and the vast mole he built across the harbour. Orleans' opposition became active; Montmorency raised the standard of revolt on his behalf, was beaten at Castelnaudary, and paid for his failure with his head. Plot after plot was made against King or minister, but each one failed before Richelieu's subtle intelligence system and bloodthirsty methods. Noble after noble met his death on the scaffold. War with Spain was progressing languidly—Richelieu's hands were too full with internal affairs to push his external campaigns with his usual vigour. But war with Spain meant danger from the Queen, and that meant a continuation of the feud between her and Richelieu.

Yet at last, by 1637, Richelieu found a little leisure. The Huguenots were thoroughly subdued, while the religious toleration he was enlightened enough to grant kept them quiet. The last batch of plots had ended in the usual executions. Montmorency was dead, Orleans was a prisoner, and Cinq-Mars was still no more than a boy. The Thirty Years' War had lost its religious significance, and with the deaths of Gustavus Adolphus and Wallenstein was changing into a mere war of mutual destruction. Richelieu felt secure enough now to allow King and Queen to come together again. This was one more deed he could do for France—the France for which he did so much, at the same time as he did so little for the French.

Richelieu was well aware of the fact that the Queen

had been desperately intriguing with the powers of Europe—probably because she had little else to do—but he rightly estimated her capacity for harm in this respect as very small. He astutely discovered evidence of her correspondence with the Duke of Lorraine, whom she was urging to attack France, apparently seemed satisfied with her protestations of innocence, and, with this weighty reserve kept in concealment, he urged Louis to summon her to his side. Louis agreed, and Anne hastened to join him at St. Maur. She was fluttered by the fright she had received, and was convinced that she had only been saved from exposure by the cleverness of her henchman La Porte ; she threw herself into the King's arms lest worse befall her. The King's arms were open to her because Richelieu willed it. Richelieu was indeed a king-maker.

From St. Maur the King and Queen went on to the Louvre, where the court tried to settle down to the strange new conditions brought about by a reconciled King and Queen. But it was not easy to settle down, for plot was still met by counterplot and rumours fled back and forth continually. Anne was still intriguing—corresponding, at least—with Spain ; on one occasion Richelieu even tore from her bosom a letter which she refused to give up to him. She was still by no means secure—until—until—the rumour began in the prophesying of a Carmelite monk ; it was confirmed by the whispers of the Queen's ladies. A Dauphin was soon to be given to France, twenty-two years after the marriage of his parents.

CHAPTER II

ENVIRONMENT

THE traditions and conventions of kingship call for the presence of an immense crowd of people whenever an heir to a throne puts himself to the trouble of being born. The great officials must be present to see that no fraud is practised on the State ; the displaced heir presumptive must be present to see that no fraud is practised on him ; great dignitaries of the Church must be present to hall-mark the occasion with their approval, and to administer baptism in case of disaster lest any little princeling should go out of the world unbaptized ; while since the Queen can never appear publicly (and, as has been pointed out, the present occasion is the most public of all) without her ladies of honour, these must also be present. Room must be found, too, for doctors and midwives.

So that it was in the presence of all these people that Anne of Austria suffered her pangs ; the greater dignitaries stayed in the room itself, while the lesser ones waited in the antechamber. The women midwives (men midwives were not employed by the royal house of France until fifty years later) did their duty as best they were able, and when the final stage was reached the curtains were for a few seconds drawn about the bed and Louis XIV was projected howling into the world. Concealed in a cupboard in the room a learned astrologer noted the exact moment, as he had been commanded by the Queen to do, and proceeded to cast horoscopes and to delve into the future. It is improbable that his forecast was at all accurate.

The birth completed, formalities continued. The

King took his seat at the bedside ; the princes and the dukes and the archbishops were brought forward and presented to His Royal Highness ; the lesser folk of the court filed into the room for the same purpose, and fireworks and artillery salutes and jail-deliveries carried the glad news to a waiting people.

In after years, when there were a good many people who cherished the utmost personal dislike for Louis XIV, rumours were busily circulated to the effect that he was not his father's son at all. Either he was a changeling child smuggled into the palace and foisted upon the people (much the same was said about the Old Pretender) or else—the alternative is obvious. There does not seem to be much possibility of there being any truth in these statements. To the first there is the obvious reply that all the precautions taken were directed against this very manœuvre, and although bedding and bed-curtains would be useful accessories, it would be a highly skilful conjuring feat which would produce from them a new-born child who had not made his presence known earlier, while, apart from this, the main achievement, a great deal of stage management would be called for to add what Pooh-Bah described as artistic verisimilitude. Too many people would have had to be in the secret.

The other suggestion is more difficult to disprove, as such suggestions always are. Certainly Louis XIII had no suspicions—but husbands are usually the last to suspect. Certainly Anne of Austria had on occasions conducted herself in a manner open to suspicion. Certainly the birth of the first child twenty-two years after marriage is curious. But the reconciliation at St. Maur is well documented, and comparison of dates (Louis XIV was born on 5 September 1638) brings out the highly significant facts that Louis XIII and Anne

were undoubtedly together reconciled at the right time, while none of Anne's supposed lovers was near her. Louis and Anne were both only thirty-five at the time of the birth; Anne had certainly been pregnant by Louis in 1622; and she bore another child (the future Duke of Orleans and Anjou) in September 1640. It seems most likely that Louis XIV was indeed the product of the union of four royal houses.

One more curious rumour of late origin remains to be dealt with. That is the suggestion that in 1638 Anne actually gave birth to twins, one of whom was hidden away to avoid a disputed succession. Later developments (and Dumas' novels) went so far as to hint that the Man in the Iron Mask was this twin brother, although Voltaire (these two authorities are put forward apologetically) suggests that he was merely an illegitimate son of Anne of Austria. On the one hand, nevertheless, it seems more than likely that the Man in the Iron Mask was Count Mattioli, in the service of the Duke of Mantua. On the other hand, the suggested motive for the suppression of one of the pair of twins seems vastly inadequate. If the formalities of the birth did not provide for the proper identification of twins they must have been below the standard of Bourbon formalities, even in the highly unlikely case of their arrival being unexpected. Louis and Anne wanted numerous children to ensure the succession (the rate of infantile mortality in the seventeenth century was such that one child hardly meant a secured succession), and two years later they brought Philip of Anjou into the world; over and above all this the suppression of the second child would have called for a conjuring trick quite as difficult and involved as that which has been discussed already in connexion with a fictitious birth.

But be these things as they may, Louis has been born ; his heredity has been examined ; the next step is to investigate the condition of his early environment. The Jesuits claim that with a free hand during the first seven years of a child's life they can mould him so that no one and nothing can efface their work later ; if that be true a great deal of Louis's later career should be susceptible of explanation.

For the brief remainder of the lifetime of Louis XIII Anne succeeded in keeping her children with her. She had sometimes to fight hard for the privilege—the threat of taking them from her was an additional weapon in the hands of Richelieu ; for the minister had still to fight desperately hard to maintain his position. He had to find armies and generals to continue the never-ending war with Spain ; he had to combat armed rebellion and continual conspiracy at home ; he had to maintain his curious ascendancy over the moody king, now fallen sickly and more careless than ever. Soissons rose in rebellion and was with difficulty repressed ; Cinq-Mars captured Louis's fitful affection and seemed to have the game in his hands until he flung away his opportunities by his recklessness and folly, dearly paid for on the scaffold. But Turenne won security for France on her Piedmontese border, and successive French generals contrived to manœuvre their armies in Picardy and Lorraine without disaster even if without conspicuous success.

Yet the state of France was by no means happy. The reforms of Sully, Henry IV's minister, had never been developed to their logical end ; financially France was in a chaotic condition. Taille and gabelle were farmed out, and for every livre that reached the Treasury another found its way into the pockets of the

tax-gatherers—and both came originally from pockets light enough in all conscience. The national income was anticipated heavily by the sale of offices, and the general inflexibility of the administrative system was exaggerated by the growing tendency of those offices to become hereditary. With a hereditary administration reform was difficult, but reform was urgently necessary ; France was still an agglomeration of feudal provinces and of recent conquests. Customs duties prevailed between province and province, and between town and country, hampering commerce and causing local irritation, while the tolls and dues of the feudal lords accentuated this effect.

Loyalty to the Crown was an idea of comparatively new growth which had hardly taken root, and the soil of France, where every noble had an army and a fortified base, was in no way congenial to it. When in addition the noble was an officer of the Crown with royal troops and castles at his disposal, the possibilities of rebellion were widened enormously. It was upon the nobles that Richelieu had turned all his savage energy ; and under Richelieu the nobles had been beaten and cowed into sullen submission ; but when Richelieu died, at the end of 1642, a little wave of relieved unrest became apparent. The King was ill—sick unto death, men whispered—and when he died there would be a long minority, a regency, and unlimited possibilities of turbulence and plunder. The King made arrangements for a regency, had them solemnly sworn to and ratified, and then passed out of this world unregretted ; for as soon as it had become obvious that the regency would pass to the Queen, the place-seekers and the toadies and the people with axes to grind had all suddenly changed their allegiance over to her ; her court at St. Germain was crowded,

and she had an enthusiastic following for the first time in her life.

The King was dead, and the trumpeters at St. Germain proclaimed the new King, Louis XIV. The court paid its homage to the child of four and a half, who received it gracefully from his seat at his mother's side. And beside his mother stood a significant figure in a red robe—Mazarin. He had caught Richelieu's eye; he had been nominated to the King's council on the very day of Richelieu's death; he had been among the first to realize the importance of the Queen's favour, and had assiduously courted that lady, and already the intriguers were painfully aware that her confidence had been captured and that unless some really determined action were taken the coveted post of first minister to the Regent would be speedily filled—filled by a foreigner, a subtle, flexible, not too clerical churchman.

Everything had been well timed. Anne had made certain of the allegiance of the household troops: at St. Germain she received constant intelligence of what was going on in Paris, and, four days after the death of Louis XIII, Louis XIV came marching into Paris amid the rejoicing of the people. No time was lost; the Parliament of Paris was summoned and a *lit de justice* held, at which, of course, the four-year-old presided. In a twinkling of an eye Louis XIII's will was set aside; the Council of Regency was dispensed with, and Anne became sole regent. Orleans, the leader of the Opposition, as usual had feared to strike until it was too late. His protests were silenced by the gift of the rather empty title of Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom; lavish promises were showered upon others whose enmity seemed likely and dangerous, and Anne (and Mazarin) seemed safely installed in the seat of



ANNE OF AUSTRIA

From the Miniature in the South Kensington Museum

power. It was a *coup d'état* which was to set the fashion in Paris for centuries.

The King, we are told, performed his part with astounding facility and grace ; his infantile tact and self-possession were very pleasing to the assembled Parliament. However, seeing that he reigned for seventy-two years after this event, and that necessarily the account of it appeared in his lifetime, it is hardly to be expected that anyone would say anything to the contrary.

Hardly had the *coup d'état* been carried through than amazing, wonderful news arrived from the frontier. Louis's reign and Mazarin's ministry were to begin in a blaze of glory.

The Thirty Years' War had now dragged on for twenty-five years ; fortune had shifted from one side to another and back again. Tilly, Wallenstein, Gustavus, had won victories and had met with disasters. Bavarians, Austrians, Swedes, Danes, had all tasted defeat at some time or other. There was only one army which had never yet been beaten in a pitched battle, and this was the army of the Spanish Netherlands. Its prestige was enormous ; it was the direct descendant of the army of Charles V, of Don John, of Alva and Parma. Sixty years ago the United Provinces had torn their independence from its very teeth, but that was only because of the amphibious nature of the warfare, while even then its victories at St. Quentin, at Gembloux, and elsewhere, and its recovery of the Catholic provinces, had sustained its reputation. Never once had the Spanish infantry been broken.

Against this army, this undefeated infantry, a tentative suggestion of Mazarin's, two months before, had dispatched a lad of twenty-one with the army which was the main hope of France. The youth in

question was naturally a prince of the blood, and the eldest son of a person it was desirable to propitiate. D'Enghien was heir to the Prince of Condé, whose influence was necessary to counteract that of Orleans; he had had the usual military training of a young noble, and apparently no one saw anything inconsistent in his being put in command of thirty thousand men—the only force which lay between the Spaniards and Paris.

D'Enghien promptly led his army across Artois in search of his enemy. The Spaniards were besieging Rocroi, whose fall would have opened to them all Champagne; even as the armies came into contact d'Enghien received the news of the King's death, together with an imploring letter from Mazarin begging him not to take any risks at this crucial state of affairs. D'Enghien put the letter into his pocket and decided to fight superior numbers, superior prestige, and superior discipline.

The Spaniards put no obstacle in his way. They left unguarded the defiles by which they might have opposed his advance, and moved out into the open plain where there would be a fair field and no favour. At dawn on 19 May 1643, the fifth day of the reign of Louis XIV, d'Enghien led his cavalry of the right against the Spanish left, and de Malo led his cavalry of the right against the French left, and both were successful. D'Enghien, in the midst of his pursuit of his routed opponents, was recalled by the appalling news that de Malo had broken through his left and his centre, driven them from the field, and was even now furiously assaulting the reserve. D'Enghien acted with promptitude, gathered his forces together, flung himself on the rear of de Malo's wing, broke it, and chased de Malo and his troopers from the field. The only

opponents left to him were now Fuentes and his Spanish infantry, who had constituted the centre, and against these he headed three furious charges. Each time he was beaten back with terrible loss ; moreover, seeing that d'Enghien had half the young nobles of France in his train this loss fell particularly severely upon the aristocratic families. His officers implored him to allow the Spaniards to march off without further molestation, but his blood was up, and at the same time he realized his mistake (the same which Napoleon made at Waterloo) in sending cavalry to charge unshaken infantry. He brought up his guns and his reserve, and tore the Spanish infantry to shreds at long range. Fuentes was mortally wounded ; his men were shaken by their losses and by the obvious hopelessness of their unsupported position. As d'Enghien led his men forward for a fourth charge the Spaniards showed the white flag.

But some of the units were not disposed to yield as easily as this ; fire reopened, and d'Enghien's cavalry, maddened by this apparent treachery, flung themselves on the Spaniards and began a fearful massacre which was only checked by the most active exertion on the part of d'Enghien himself. Then the day was over, the surviving Spaniards yielded and there was time to reckon up gains and losses.

The French losses, particularly among the noble families, were undoubtedly heavy. But, on the other hand, the Spanish army had ceased to exist. Seven thousand men had been killed, seven thousand taken prisoners, and the miserable remainder was scattered far and wide. Even then these figures are hardly a measure for the result, for those seven thousand prisoners were nearly all Spanish infantry—the unconquerable troops with a victorious record two centuries

old. In a single day Spanish military prestige had been ruined, while that of France was raised to unlooked-for heights by a victory more complete than the most sanguine could have expected. To Spain, Rocroi was as disastrous as was the defeat of the Armada ; to France it was a victory as stimulating as England had known in 1588.

When the news arrived all Paris — and France — fell delirious with joy. The Queen's regency was strengthened, and the mouths of its detractors were stopped. To Louis, aged then nearly five, it must have been one of the earliest memories of his life to survive his infancy. His father's death, the uncertainties of the entry into Paris, the *lit de justice*, and then the triumphant news, the rejoicings, the obvious relief of the people about him, and the quelling of the opposition ; the memory of all these must have abided with him and have influenced his actions and motives to an extent which must be allowed for in an estimate of his character.

Now began a five-year period of tranquillity for King and Regent. Paris was quiet, the provinces were quiet, and the nobility was bribed into the semblance of quietude by the lavish promises of Mazarin. The war was progressing favourably, in the peculiarly languid fashion of that era of professional armies, numerous fortresses, and inadequate artillery. Turenne and d'Enghien, despite occasional reverses and a few irritating mutinies, gradually established the supremacy of the French armies in Flanders and Germany, and although d'Enghien was repulsed in Catalonia, and Turenne beaten at Marienthal, the former won back all his old laurels by his victory at Lens (as complete a success as Rocroi, and against the same adversaries), and the latter struck down the Imperialists and

Bavarians in the long-drawn-out fight at Zusmarhausen. Turenne was moving on Munich and Vienna when his march was stayed by the peace of Münster, which brought to a close France's share in the Thirty Years' War, and which added to the domains of Louis XIV much of Alsace and Lorraine, and established France as the foremost military power in Europe.

The King himself was growing up. At seven, as was customary, his nurses and governesses were taken from him and replaced by male *valets de chambre* (of whom the chief was the memoirist, La Porte), governors, and preceptors. Mazarin, to whom had been given the supervision of his education, delegated his duties to the Abbé de Beaumont, the author of a sound biography of Henry IV, but as far as can be ascertained not very much was done to insure improvement either in Louis's character or in his knowledge. His governor was the Maréchal de Villeroy, whose sycophancy and complaisance were carried to such lengths that even Louis jeered at them, remarking that Villeroy granted his requests before they were asked.

Yet Louis grew fond of Villeroy and of his family—a fondness which was to bear evil fruit later—and on the other hand he developed a desperate antipathy towards Mazarin and his nephew, which the Cardinal, despite all his blandishments, could never overcome. There may be a darker reason for this than may be found in the Cardinal's wealth, manners, or power, for Mazarin is everywhere looked upon as the Queen's lover; some people even believed they were married, although seeing that Mazarin was a cardinal and also a priest (it is, or was, quite possible to be a cardinal without being a priest, but fairly recent researches seem to prove that Mazarin had been ordained), this seems unlikely, and the marriage would be illegal. It

could not possibly take long in such a court as that of France at this period for the boy to discover the fact that his mother was the Cardinal's mistress, and in that case, without even calling in the aid of such a modern bit of phraseology as 'Oedipus-complex,' the hatred is readily explained.

In addition, there is little room for doubt that Mazarin took every chance which lay in his power of stunting the boy's mental growth. Kings in France could be declared of age at fourteen or even at twelve, and Mazarin preferred that Louis should not be able to take over the reins of power until much later—until, indeed, Mazarin would be safe from the King's vengeance in whatever sphere to which church dignitaries of his eminence and record are translated.

Consequently young Louis studied just as much as he wanted to, which was about as much as any average ten-year-old ever wants to. When the Abbé de Beaumont appealed to Mazarin to be given further powers which might enable him to compel the idle young prince to pay some attention—powers the nature of which may be guessed—he met with a refusal. Mazarin declared himself entirely satisfied with the King's progress. Books of any value were scratched off the royal curriculum, and Louis learned what he knew of the history of France from the nightly readings of La Porte, who substituted Mezerai's book for the fairy tales with which his nursemaids had been wont to beguile him to sleep.

And then at ten years old this scrappy education was sadly interrupted. The five years of the Queen's regency and of Mazarin's ministry had prepared a state of affairs in which disaster was inevitable. Mazarin had made a whole series of mistakes most of them so elementary that it is surprising that one so

keen-witted should have been guilty of them. To begin with, he had attempted no reform of the fiscal system. He had continued with the old bad methods, and by remitting taxes he had reduced the already insufficient amounts which reached the royal treasury. To augment the national income he had proceeded to create and sell new offices, and to interfere with those already sold, and thereby he had irritated the whole class of minor office-holders.

In addition, he had not fulfilled the promises made at the time of the *coup d'état*. He had bought the support of the Orleans circle by the promise of places, or of the reversion of places, but in nearly every case he hesitated when matters progressed as far as the grant of them. He could not bring himself actually to bestow them. Many of them remained vacant ; others he filled with his own creatures. The parties of Orleans, Condé, and Bouillon became steadily more irritated as time passed and the promised offices fell vacant and remained so.

Next, as the need for money grew, he acted on the advice of his superintendent of finance, Emery, and revived a dead-letter edict concerning building regulations in Paris, spread consternation throughout the house-owners of the suburbs—and failed to obtain the money.

He allowed de Retz, Archbishop-coadjutor of Paris, to quarrel with him. That in itself was not difficult, seeing that de Retz was born for turbulence and conspiracy, and was disappointed at the failure of Mazarin to obtain for him the cardinalate he had promised. But Mazarin allowed the quarrel to become public, and finally had to yield, publicly, after thoroughly annoying both the Church and the Paris mob.

Finally, he added fuel to all these flames by his gradual assumption of almost royal state, by his display of wealth and of power, and by his organization of a personal military guard. By the time 1648 arrived there was no one in France who did not cherish some grudge against him, and who did not seek his downfall—save only the Queen.

It was not very long before a slight disturbance broke up the unstable equilibrium of affairs. A dispute arose between minister and Parliament. Ten-year-old Louis was called in, to summon Parliament to a bed of justice, whereat the Chancellor endeavoured to give with one hand, to take with the other, and simultaneously to set Parliament against people. Parliament, however, displayed an unusual carping spirit; de Retz plunged gaily into the affray in temporary alliance with Beaufort, the Roi des Halles ('Billingsgate King') and the whole turmoil of the Fronde was begun, with all its accessories—a rebellious Paris building barricades in the streets, traitorous nobles, restive provinces, mutinous armies, and a hostile Spain.

To Louis the next five years must have passed like a nightmare. Not for centuries had the royal dignity been so rudely disturbed. The riots in Paris were accompanied by blind terror in the Palais Royal—terror which the King must have noticed, when the officers of the tiny palace guard were assuring the Queen that they would die at their posts (a statement by no means reassuring), until eventually Queen and King and court fled to Ruel. Louis and Mazarin, with a dangerously small escort, had to slip through the mob like fugitives from justice, beating off the attempts made to detain them. The Queen followed, still firmly on the side of Mazarin, but fluttered and

flustered despite her determined obstinacy. It was a flight which might have been as dangerous as that to Varennes a hundred and forty years later.

Then came Condé—he who had been Duc d'Enghien—with the laurels of Lens on his brow and his army at his back. Further promises from Mazarin bought his aid, Paris was overawed, and the King was brought back to the Palais Royal, where, nevertheless, double guards were stood lest Orleans or de Retz should carry him off.

For some turbulent months did the King remain there, but the tide turned again, Condé's following fell away from him, and again the court had to fly, in dead secrecy. This time they reached St. Germain in safety; the court slept on straw bought at famine prices, more troops were assembled in desperate haste, and civil war was fairly begun.

The following years still brought terror and topsyturvydom. Paris was once more conquered and entered, while, incredibly, Turenne turned against the King and marched on the city, to be defeated at Rhetel. Mazarin went into exile. Every one—Regent, Parliament, Condé—declared they were acting in the name of the King, and declared the opposition guilty of treason. Mazarin, in exile at Brühl, formed a scheme to put a stop to this, and the Queen acted on his advice. At thirteen Louis was declared of age; he rode through Paris in the midst of a brilliant procession, held a bed of justice whereat Queen, nobles, and Parliament declared their loyalty, made a formal little speech, and retired once more into the watchful guardianship of Anne. The contrast between the display of devotion in the Palace of Parliament and Anne's domineering authority in the Palais Royal must have ranked deeply in the bosom of the boy of thirteen.

Then Turenne came back to his allegiance, and Mazarin came back from Brühl. Inevitably Condé turned against the King, allied himself to the Parisians and to the Spaniards, and raised the standard of revolt in Guienne. The court began to trail in forlorn fashion in the wake of Turenne's army—the only place where it could be safe. Louis had the bitter experience, more than once, of being barred out of towns in open rebellion against him—against him, the King, not against the regency now. There was one terrible time when Condé surprised part of the royalist army, routed it, and marched with his usual rapidity on Gien, where lay the King and the court. There was no place to which Louis could fly, and it seemed inevitable that he should fall ignominiously into Condé's hands when Turenne arrived with a small reinforcement, rallied the flying royalists, and barred Condé's path with such skill and determination that time was given for the rest of the army to arrive, and for Condé's motley force to dissipate its strength in clumsy manœuvres. Louis was saved; in the words of the Queen, Turenne had put the crown for a second time on his head. But it was hardly a dignified admission to make.

Through all this time Louis had been wandering round France, in battered carriages and wearing threadbare clothes, sometimes with quarters so restricted that he had to share a room with his brother of Anjou (La Porte tells an amusing story of a spitting-match which arose between the brothers in these circumstances), with little money and with less credit. And it was not by any brilliant victory or sensational triumph that he was re-established on his throne. The rebellion frittered out largely through the sheer instability of its supporters. People grew bored with rebellion; the

Parisians grew tired of having to put up with Condé's undisciplined hordes. A fierce, indecisive battle at the gates of Paris exhausted every one's patience, and Condé was glad to make his escape from the capital, which Louis was soon able to enter—at the price of a nearly general amnesty.

Even then the wretched business was not quite over. The revolted provinces had to be subdued at the cost of a good deal of blood, while Condé had been appointed to the command of the Spanish armies of the north and was ravaging Flanders with fire and sword. Turenne had to be sent against him, and although Turenne met with more successes than reverses, the exhausted strength of France did not suffice to put an end to the war. Eventually Mazarin had to make an alliance with Cromwell, the regicide, the heretic, the republican (this must have been the bitterest drop in all Louis's cup) to obtain aid on the sea and the use of a disciplined army to beat the Spaniards and bring peace to the Low Countries. With the Ironsides' aid Turenne won the battle of the Dunes and peace was forced upon Spain. Cromwell's price was the cession of Dunkirk and all that this implied.

All this time the King had been growing up. He was fourteen when the civil war ended, and he was nearly twenty at the time of the battle of the Dunes. But he was still under the tutelage of the Queen and of Mazarin.

These two played their part cleverly. They did not allow their methods to be apparent, but both by active methods and indirect ones they kept the young King from taking any part in the direction of the State. Actively, by preventing him from forming any party—at the first signs of any chance of this occurring Louis's

adherents were sent to the Bastille, or to Vincennes, or to their estates, under a *lettre de cachet*, or were relegated to honourable exile or diplomatic missions. The King was kept reconciled as far as possible to this system by diverting his energies to other channels. He was encouraged to accompany Turenne on his campaigns; he was stimulated into enthusiasm for hunting, for dancing, and for all the trivialities of a time-wasting court. When, as occasionally happened, there was no holding him in these harmless grooves, he was sent to the Parliament to bully them into inactivity, an employment which was congenial to him and very desirable to the Queen. There was one notable occasion when Parliament met to debate upon the fiscal decree which the King had compelled them to register. Urged on by Mazarin, Louis, as soon as he heard that the debate had been initiated, left his hunt, and rode post haste to Paris. He strode into the chamber booted, spurred, and with his whip still in his hand, forbade the debate, without explanation or apology, and strode out again, leaving it plain to the assembly that to continue to demur meant bringing the royal displeasure upon their heads; and the royal displeasure meant imprisonment or even death, with the alternative of civil war if they could find a following. They had no following, and the debate closed.

When Louis was almost sixteen, and growing a little restless under the continued supervision of Anne and Mazarin, these latter arranged as a diversion his coronation at Rheims. It would keep him quiet for a while; it would impress the French people, and it would strengthen their cause, very considerably in the case of rebellion.

The ceremony was to be carried through with all the pomp and circumstance that could be devised;



MARÉCHAL TURENNE

From an Engraving after the Painting by Chambrague in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

tradition was to be helped out as far as possible by modern invention. There is in existence a little book, published by the Chapter of Rheims Cathedral, written expressly for the benefit of those unfortunates who were not able to be present, although in its preamble it modestly states that it is unlikely that the book will ever be able to recall to the reader the solemnity and splendour of the occasion. Mention is made of the holy ampulla, 'the mysterious gift of Heaven,' and its contents, 'the divine Balm,' with its marvellous and unearthly perfume; and the book's opening words state boldly that only Princes of the Church are worthy of handling the ampulla, and only royal heads are worthy of anointment with the oil.

Louis arrived in Rheims on 3 June 1654 to be received by the magistrates and by some seven thousand inhabitants, mounted and on foot, and to be welcomed at the church by the Bishops of Soissons, Beauvais, and Noyon—the Archbishopric of Rheims being vacant because Mazarin could not make up his mind on whom to bestow it. He found the church decorated from galleries to floor with the royal tapestries; priceless Turkey and Persian rugs covering the floor; the altars covered with gold-embroidered satin and decorated with jewelled reliquaries, and, at the foot of the grand altar, a platform and throne awaiting him in the usual royal violet with golden fleurs-de-lis. From the cathedral Louis retired to the archiepiscopal palace, where the rest of his day was taken up with receiving the homage of the officials of the Church and of the town, and the succeeding days were filled with Church and civil ceremonies.

The great day was Sunday, 7 June. The Bishop of Soissons began his day at the grisly hour of half-past

four A.M. ; at that time he, with four other bishops in cloth of gold, took up position before the altar, while the five bishops and archbishops representing the ecclesiastical peers of France took their seats below the dais, where later they were joined by the six lay peers in their ceremonial robes of gold or silver cloth, wearing their ducal mantles of scarlet open on the right shoulder, and their ducal coronets and violet caps of maintenance. The other arrivals now followed fast—Anne the Queen-Mother, the Queen of England and her two younger sons of York and Gloucester, the wives of the peers, Cardinal Mazarin and Cardinal Grimaldi, another dozen bishops, the Knights of the Holy Ghost, the councillors of State, the marshals of France, ambassadors and their suites, and lesser fry without number. When all were settled some of them had to rise up again and form a new procession out of the cathedral to fetch Louis from the archbishop's palace ; they found him ceremoniously in bed, although fully dressed in cloth of silver with bonnet and plume, with his constable, chancellor, chamberlain, and gentlemen standing round. They lifted him ceremoniously from his bed and led him to the church.

The procession of course was of the grandest. The clergy led, followed by the Scottish Archers of the Guard, the Cent Suisses, a dozen each of trumpets, fifes, hautbois, flutes, sackbuts, and bagpipes (the instrumentalists were dressed in white—perhaps to show they bore no ill-feeling to the community), and the heralds and kings of arms. Then followed a hundred gentlemen of the household, and after them the marshals of France, the senior of them, d'Estrées, as *ex officio* constable, bearing the drawn sword of State. The King followed the marshals, and was led to the dais, where he knelt amid prayer.

At the same time another procession arrived from the Abbey of St. Rémi ; the monks and the grand prior brought the holy ampulla for delivery to the Bishop of Soissons, the grand prior in cloth of gold and with a civic guard, drums beating, colours flying. Having delivered his precious charge, the grand prior retired into the background and the business of the coronation continued.

Louis took his oath, and received the consecrated oil, which was applied to his head, stomach, back, shoulders, and arm-joints. His ceremonial robes and underlinen had special holes for the purpose, which were held open by the assistants of the bishop. The oil was poured in his hands, which then received the gloves and ring and sceptre of royalty. Then the peers were summoned to the dais for the final act, and the crown was placed on his head, and the crowning was followed by the inthronization—the clumsy word is used by the Cathedral Chapter itself.

There only remained a Mass to be held and a solemn offering to be given by the King, who then took communion. At three in the afternoon another procession marched back to the palace for the State dinner ; the bishops who had come on duty at four-thirty, of course, accompanying it.

The King dined alone at his table (which was decorated with the crown, sceptre, hand of justice, and the other emblems of royalty), waited upon by the grand officers. At another table dined the ecclesiastical peers, and at yet another the lay peers. From a little gallery in the hall the ladies of the court were permitted to watch the King at dinner. Finally, after dinner, the bishops were able to return to the cathedral in order, as the contemporary description puts it in homely fashion, to take off their pontifical garments of

gold, after something over twelve hours of ceremonial duty.

And all this solemn business did nothing towards increasing the power of the King. The gaps in the ranks of bishops and peers showed how Mazarin was tardy in bestowing preferment, and that some of the peers were keeping out of the way for fear of arrest. The young man who bore the King's train was a Prince Eugène of Savoy, and was shortly to become the father of another and more famous Prince Eugène, who was to shake the royal power to its foundations. Half the officers who surrounded the King had been in arms against him at one time or another. Perhaps they would be deterred from attempting it again, now that Louis was the Lord's anointed. Perhaps not, too.

The end of Mazarin's long ministry found Louis a young man of twenty-two, handsome, stalwart, a good dancer, and a keen huntsman. Not much more could be said about him, save that he cherished a supreme dislike for powerful ministers and for intriguing courtiers; that he hated the *canaille*, and that he feared, disliked, and distrusted popular assemblies. On the other side of the Channel he had seen a popular assembly rouse a nation to arms against its king; he had seen that king defeated, imprisoned, beheaded; he had seen that king's wife and children fugitives and pensioners at his own court. On his side of the Channel he had been treated with contumely, made to fly from his capital like a thief, to sleep upon straw, to dine on a single course, to sleep with his brother—largely through the action of the Paris Parliament. On one occasion the *canaille* had forced admittance to the palace, and had filed through the royal bedchamber, merely to assure itself that he had not escaped again. He had seen the vast increase in Condé's power as

the result of his military successes; he had seen provinces won by the sword; he had had it forced upon him that a victory in the field will give a government a prestige which will override the murmurs of the people who have to find the money for it.

His education in the matter of government had been Mazarin's example. In foreign affairs he had seen the invariable employment of the most unprincipled diplomacy directed to the most selfish ends; in domestic affairs he had seen a precarious throne buttressed by breaches of faith, by arbitrary exertion of authority, and by the ultimate appeal to the sword, tempered by an opportunist lack of policy. Of book knowledge he had little, thanks to the conditions prevailing and to Mazarin's care. He was in no position to judge of the effect of tariffs or of manipulations of currency. In fact, his whole equipment when he came to take over the reins of government consisted of his native wit, his knowledge of men, and a varied assortment of prejudices and fixed ideas. By the aid of these he was to rule over the foremost military power and the largest population in Europe.

[NOTE.—There is a difference of opinion regarding the value of Louis's education; some later authorities, such as M. Lacour-Gayet, believe that at any rate on the political side Louis was well trained, but at least in the present writer's opinion the weight of evidence is opposed to this.]

CHAPTER III

THE SEARCH FOR A WIFE

LOUIS XIV's father had been married at the age of thirteen, and to a princess of Spain. The marriage had hardly been a happy one, and it did not prevent a war of over thirty years' duration between the two countries. But, all the same, it seemed necessary to find a wife for Louis, as early as possible of the highest possible rank. Nevertheless, it was not Louis who had to be consulted so much as His Eminence the Cardinal, and we can hardly discuss one of his plans without immediately becoming enmeshed in a whole series of intrigues.

Mazarin had a number of nephews and nieces, whom he did his best to elevate to high stations. While Louis was still a mere boy—too young for a royal marriage—Mazarin had found splendid husbands (as far as wealth and lineage went) for the two daughters of his sister Signora Martinozzi. Anne-Marie had married the Prince de Conti, Condé's brother, and a prince of the blood. Laure, after various negotiations, had married Alfonso d'Este, heir of the Duke of Modena—a union which eventually made Mazarin's great-niece Queen of England and her son Prince of Wales, called by the faithful James III of England. By his other sister, Signora di Mancini, Mazarin had five nieces and three nephews. His own immense influence and wealth made these children highly desirable brides and bridegrooms. Two of the boys were unlucky. One of them was killed in Turenne's battle with Condé at the Porte St. Antoine, and another was killed by accident in a blanket-tossing

episode at the Jesuit college. The third, Philippe, became Duc de Nevers, married a niece of Montespan, and became, to later generations, a highly respectable ancestor. Of the nieces, Laure married the Duc de Mercœur, son of the Duc de Vendôme and grandson (with a bar sinister) of Henry IV ; Olympe married the Count of Bourbon-Soissons, and was therefore closely connected with the legitimate lines of France and of Savoy ; while Hortense had been eagerly wooed by the penniless Charles II of England while in exile, and had even been proposed for by the reigning King of Portugal.

All this is merely to show that Mazarin's nieces were by no means considered unsuitable for quite lofty marriages. The King cast an eye upon several of them, too.

After the Fronde, Mazarin had set up his nieces in great state at court. Much of the time they had place and precedence equivalent to that of princesses of the blood. Louis came into contact with them ; they were playfellows together. Olympe, as she grew older, grew beautiful, and it was not long before the whole court was whispering that there was more than friendship between her and Louis. But the court only whispered it ; no one was quite sure, and all eyes were turned on Mazarin to see what he would do about it. He did little enough.

It was only rarely that Mazarin could bring himself to achieve a bold stroke, and his timidity was redoubled when it became likely that what he did would receive the fullest publicity. Mazarin usually preferred to work out of sight and by slow steps. He dared to carry on a secret liaison with the Queen-Mother (it was that, indeed, which had been his salvation during the Fronde), but he would hardly dare have his niece

married to the King. Such an action might infuriate France ; it would afford a rallying point to the divided opposition ; more important than all, it might lose him the Queen-Mother's favour. However, the temptation was great, and he dallied with the idea, while Olympe, dazzled with the prospect of becoming Queen of France, did her best on her own account to make the King marry her.

She did not succeed—most likely because she had accorded him too much already. Her beauty and her wit were not sufficiently great ; Anne of Austria opposed her, and eventually, for lack of anything better, she married the Count of Soissons. After her marriage Louis continued to visit her, and the court no longer whispered. What they thought they said aloud, and wrote in letters and diaries and memoirs. Everybody was quite sure.

Meanwhile, the King had now reached the age of eighteen, high time even for a boy who was not a King to find a wife. Various suggestions were put forward.

The one which at first glance seemed the most practicable involved the union of the line of France with that of Orleans. La Grande Mademoiselle was the eldest daughter of the Duke of Orleans, and consequently Louis's cousin. Her father had on more than one occasion headed the opposition against the King during the Fronde, and he had formed the figurehead of three-quarters of the rebellion with which France had been afflicted during forty years. Marriage with her would tend to heal the breach, it would bring with it no entangling foreign alliances, and, since the lady had no brothers, it would not raise up any more powerful royal princes. But it was La Grande Mademoiselle who had caused the guns of the Bastille to fire on the royal army at the battle of the Porte

St. Martin and who had secured Condé's retreat into Paris. When Mazarin had seen that done he had exclaimed, 'There goes a cannon which has killed a husband'—implying that the deed made the marriage impossible. His determination became more fixed when he learned that his beloved nephew Paul had been mortally wounded in the battle. This last was the culminating factor; never would Mazarin permit the marriage.

As alternatives, various other ladies were suggested. There was a princess of Savoy, said to be ugly, but whose brother the duke controlled the passes over the Alps which would enable the French to strike at Spain in the Milanese. There was Henrietta of England, who, like Margherita of Savoy, was a granddaughter of Henry IV and whose brother also would be a very desirable ally. Most desirable of all was Marie Thérèse, Infanta of Spain, who might bring peace to France as well as highly desirable possibilities in the matter of the succession. Mazarin proceeded to debate the question. Louis proceeded to become entangled with Marie de Mancini, Olympe's sister.

He had, of course, known her for years, but he had first become really friendly with her by meeting her when calling upon her dying mother. On Olympe's marriage she took over the latter's places at court, and Louis's attachment for her was remarked on at about the same time as rumour grew loudest regarding him and Olympe. Then, in 1658, he went to Flanders to accompany Turenne in his campaign against Condé. Marie was something of an idealist, rather romantic, and in the firmest agreement with the ideas of the ancient chivalry. Louis was a burly, awkward, rather shy young man, with, at present, no very good opinion of himself—thanks to Mazarin and Anne of Austria.

And Marie was in love with him. There could be no doubt of that, at least. So far had matters progressed after the doubtful start of tentative literary studies together; dances and moonlight rides had born fruit in the end.

Yet it was a very idealized passion. To Marie, Louis was her knight, her champion, her Bayard, and Louis could not do less than try to do something to merit this opinion of him. To be thought of in this fashion was very new and irresistible to a lad of twenty. Off he went to join Turenne in his triumphant campaign. He saw Mardyke taken and the siege of Dunkirk formed; he saw Condé's Spanish army marching up to its relief. He was at Turenne's side when the French army was wheeled round at the attack; he heard the orders given which beat off Condé's desperate charges, and which sent Morgan and his Ironside infantry, pikes trailing and voices raised in a hymn which drowned the artillery, stubbornly through the gunfire and the Spanish centre to win the battle. Dunkirk fell; the army marched on to Bergues. Louis rode round the town within musket shot, under a heavy fire—seemingly to prove to himself that his courage was worthy of Marie's regard.

Alas! that was his last chance of distinguishing himself for some time to come. Two days later he went down with enteric, as thousands of his soldiers had done before him. Panic ensued; Mazarin and the Queen feared the worst; the court looked for his successor; frantic letters restrained Turenne from wringing the fullest advantage from the victory of the Dunes. Louis was taken to Calais, where he struggled for his life against the disease and the attentions of the doctors.

His powerful constitution pulled him through,

although popular opinion attributed his recovery to the last medicine given him—tartar emetic! Then he came back, to Compiègne and Fontainebleau, to fêtes and rejoicings and triumphs, to the Queen-Mother and to Marie de Mancini—especially Marie. Olympe was not with the court, for a family event kept her at home; Louis spent his time in picnics and hunting and dancing, and Marie was at his side most of the time. When at the approach of winter the court returned to Paris it was noticed that his visits to Olympe's *hôtel* were not renewed.

And all this time Mazarin was seeking a wife for him. He had almost despaired of obtaining the Spanish Infanta, and now he determined on one bold stroke which might secure the coveted prize, and which would bring the second best within reach simultaneously. He approached the Duchess-Regent of Savoy regarding a marriage between Louis and her daughter Margaret, and the duchess-regent was precipitately agreeable.

Both the real design and the apparent one were masked with all the elaborate forms and ceremonies which hedge round royalty. Louis and his court set out on a slow royal progress through the provinces to Lyon; the duchess-regent set out to meet the court there, ostensibly on a mere visit of courtesy.

The royal progress ambled on, through Troyes and Chalons, and still the court noticed that the King rode constantly with Marie, while he steadily ignored Her Highness the Countess of Soissons—Olympe, her sister and predecessor. Marie and he chattered happily together the whole tedious journey; but the chatter was innocent enough. Marie showed her admiration for Louis so plainly that Louis for very shame could attempt nothing further, even if he wished to. Besides, close to Marie there was always Madame

de Venel, an elderly lady of unimpeachable morals who was charged with the duty (imposed upon her by Mazarin) of maintaining Marie's virtue at all costs. She had a hard life, poor old lady ; she had to accompany her on headlong gallops, on mountain climbing, on little walks in the moonlight ; she had to put up with Louis's rudenesses on the occasions when his patience was exhausted—on one notable occasion Louis gave her a box of sweets which turned out to be full of live mice—and above all she had to endure the continual babble of the lovelorn pair. Truly she earned her salary.

At last the court reached Lyon, and the duchess-regent sent word that she and her son and daughter would arrive in a few days' time. As they neared the town King and Queen and Cardinal rode forward to meet them, the King in advance, and every one waited anxiously to hear his opinion of the princess who was being brought for his inspection. It was favourable. The princess was very tiny, but she had a lovely figure and a beautiful complexion and beautiful eyes. Apparently Louis would put up with her for a wife, if he had to have a wife.

Yet she was not to be his wife. Mazarin's diplomacy had been successful. At the first rumours that Louis and Margaret of Savoy were to meet the court of Spain was seriously alarmed. An alliance between Savoy and France was always dangerous to Spain, and, moreover, the latter kingdom was thoroughly exhausted with war ; the battle of the Dunes had left her nearly helpless. In dead secrecy an envoy hurried from Spain to Lyon, gained an audience with the Cardinal, and offered him peace for France and Marie-Thérèse's hand for Louis. It was the reward of a dozen years of striving.

It only remained to get rid of the Savoyard princess. That was fairly easy, for Louis was encouraged to see as much of Marie as he wished, with the result that Margherita found herself utterly neglected. The duchess-regent was brought to reason by pointing out to her that her daughter could not possibly compete in the marriage market with a Spanish princess, and was reconciled to her failure by a promise that in the event of negotiations with Spain falling through the marriage between Louis and Margherita should at once be concluded. That was a promise after Mazarin's own heart, for it was a threat to Spain and so an assurance that it would never need to be carried out. Then the court of Savoy returned disconsolate to Turin, and the court of France returned jubilant to Paris. Louis was more assiduous than ever in his attentions to Marie.

It may be taken as certain that Mazarin did not want Louis to marry his niece ; the risk would not be worth the profit. The Queen-Mother was certainly in agreement with him. As for Louis, there were times when he thought that he could not honourably withdraw, but there were also times when he saw that it would not be honourable for him to plunge France into a new civil war, and at the same time to deprive her of the advantages of the Spanish marriage, solely for the sake of his own sentiments : especially when those sentiments were two years old and beginning to lose their early savour.

But Marie held different views. She wanted to marry Louis, but not merely because she wanted to be Queen of France. That was a very secondary consideration. She was genuinely and romantically in love with him, and too romantically in love to be content with anything less than marriage. The only

doubt lay in whether this last condition would remain constant. The court of France did not think so, Louis hoped not, and Mazarin had his doubts. He was not desirous of having his beautiful niece cheapened in the marriage market, and when the time came for him to journey to the Pyrenees to settle definite terms of peace with Spain he decided that he could not leave her in dangerous proximity to the King. He issued orders for her and her unmarried sisters to go into retirement at La Rochelle.

This was the decisive moment. If Louis's passion was great enough to induce him to defy Mazarin and his mother and public opinion, this was his last chance to declare it. He hesitated—there is no doubt at all that he hesitated—but he could not bring himself to abandon the splendid prize of the Spanish marriage. He contented himself with the hopeless half-measures characteristic of an enfeebled determination. He wrote her passionate letters—she received five by a single courier—he bought her a string of pearls from the widow of Charles I of England; he buried himself in solitude at Chantilly, but he asserted himself no further.

Mazarin proceeded cautiously towards the inevitable end. He arranged with the governor of La Rochelle to keep a careful watch over the correspondence, and he impressed over and over again upon the unhappy Mme de Venel the necessity of keeping Marie under the closest possible supervision. While the negotiations for the Treaty of the Pyrenees were advancing he wrote a series of brilliant and convincing letters to the King, pointing out that his actions were prejudicing the chances of the Spanish marriage while achieving no other object. He backed his expostulations with a very definite threat to retire from France altogether and take Marie with him.



LOUIS XIV AS A YOUNG MAN

From the Miniature by Petitot at Montagu House

In the midst of all these troubles—letters to and from the King, the Queen, and his nieces—and while suffering from desperate ill-health, Mazarin still contrived to carry through the chafferings and bargainings with Spain. He won Artois and Rousillon for France, along with a definite footing in Alsace and in Lorraine, with a passage over the Rhine at Philipsburg and a passage over the Alps at Pignerole. Above all, he won for Louis the hand of Maria Theresa, although he had to yield in the matter of Condé, granting him pardon and amnesty and restoration of his old dignities.

The news that the Spanish marriage was definitely arranged came as a surprise both to Louis and Marie. To Louis it meant that he would have to break with Marie—and he still did not want to. To Marie it meant the end of all her hopes. It was Marie who took the first steps. She announced bravely that she would hold no more correspondence with the King, and wrote to her uncle begging him to find a husband for her as quickly as possible—a sovereign prince if there was one available; otherwise any one not too repulsive would be acceptable.

Louis wrote to her, protested, implored—but he set out with the court on a slow progress towards the frontier to meet his bride. And with him there travelled his mother and the Countess of Soissons; and malicious tongues had it that he was finding consolation and repose in the arms of this old love of his—Marie's own sister!

The King drew near the frontier; the King of Spain and his daughter were not far off on the other side. On 3 June 1660 a marriage by procuration took place, wherein Don Luis de Haro, the Spanish Minister of State, stood proxy for the King. On June 6th Louis of France and Philip of Spain met and swore to

observe the Treaty of the Pyrenees, and on June 9th Marie-Thérèse was married to Louis in the church which gives its name to St.-Jean-de-Luz.

Marie Thérèse was a stoutish, dull young woman, blonde like her father and grandfather, blue-eyed, heavy-featured, lackadaisical in manner, timid, ignorant, with bad teeth and a poor complexion ; she was in no way a beauty, and her brains did not make up for her lack of looks. She went stupidly through the ceremony ; seemingly she took no delight in her gown and train of the royal violet edged with ermine and sewn with fleurs-de-lis. She hardly seemed to notice her escort of princes of the blood, or the three princesses who supported her mantle.

Louis, on the other hand, seemed pleased and happy. He wore his cloth of gold with true kingly dignity, and it is from this time that we can begin to date his assumption of a royal bearing and the loss of his early clumsiness. Certain it is that he spent the rest of the day eagerly wooing his bride (the pair had only had glimpses of each other before this day), and almost equally certainly it appears that he was as successful as heart could desire. For the rest of their honeymoon at St. Jean-de-Luz they seemed to be very happy.

It was not until the end of August that they returned to Paris, and made the entry which impressed all the memoir writers so deeply. They had received, seated on a special dais in the Faubourg St. Antoine, the homage of the corporate bodies of Paris, and then they marched in solemn procession through the Porte St. Antoine along to the Louvre. The procession appears to have been headed by seventy-two baggage mules of Mazarin's, followed by his twelve six-horse carriages. Mazarin himself was not present—he was

ill, and watched the procession from the Hôtel de Beauvais; but for all that the sight of Mazarin's household, and of his mules with silver bits and trappings, seems to have made a profound impression, odd though their presence may appear. The Duke of Orleans followed the mules, and the King followed the duke, preceded, however, by a troop of pages, four squadrons of musketeers, a regiment of light horse, a crowd of gentlemen of the court, in cloth of gold, the Cent-Suisses, and the marshals of France. The King wore silver brocade set off by flame-coloured ribbons and plumes; his clothes were sewn with pearls, and his Spanish horse's trappings were ornamented with precious stones.

The Queen followed, in a coach built for the occasion, covered with meshwork of solid gold and silver wire, both it and its canopy adorned with pearls and other jewels, all of which were made much of in the next issue of the official gazette.

And from the windows of the Hôtel de Beauvais there watched the Queen-Mother, Henrietta Princess of England, the Countess of Soissons, Marie de Mancini, Mme de Beauvais. All these had special reasons for disliking the ceremony. At an upper window, hardly removed from the superior servants, was a certain Mme Scarron.

CHAPTER IV

FRANCE—AND FOUQUET

FOR the King had lost his youthful bloom a long time before. In a court where adultery was more frequent than constancy, where debauchery was the rule, it was hardly likely that a vigorous young man would have passed unregarded, even had he not been King. A good many women had looked covetously at his youth, and had thought longingly of the places and wealth he would be able to bestow in years to come. One of them carried off the prize, and, as might be expected, she was one of the inner circle of the court. As was also to be expected, she was one of the most depraved of them all ; but it is quite surprising to find contemporary accounts describing her as aged and ugly. Anne of Austria's nickname for her was 'Cateau la borgnesse,' and she was Mme de Beauvais, First Lady of the Bedchamber to the Queen-Mother. Everybody except Anne seemed to find the whole business vastly amusing, and even Anne was not sufficiently enraged to dismiss her or to show any official displeasure whatever.

From rank without youth or beauty Louis passed on to youth and beauty without rank—a gardener's daughter bore him a child, for whom later he procured a husband of good rank and fortune. Then followed various other adventures, successful and otherwise. He wooed the Duchess of Chatillon, who had been mistress of the Grand Condé ; with less success he pursued the Princess de Conti (who was incidentally another niece of Mazarin's) ; and he made cautious advances to other beauties of the court even when

he was involved with the two Mancini sisters, Marie and the Countess of Soissons. But now that he was married to a woman he deemed worthy of himself he kept to the path of virtue for quite a while—for over a year, seemingly.

Mazarin was dying. There could be no two opinions about that. He himself was sure of it, and was setting his house in order. He bought a husband for Marie, in the person of Lorenzo Colonna, Constable of the Kingdom of Naples, of the bluest blood of Italy—a marriage which did not turn out too happily. For his remaining niece, Hortense, he found a husband in the Marquis de Meilleraye, whom, on the day of his marriage, the King created Duc de Mazarin. Once again the marriage was unfortunate, for in later years Hortense had to leave her husband and wandered through Europe under the protection of various gentlemen successively—being for a time one of the subordinate mistresses of Charles II of England.

However, Mazarin was not to foresee all this; he had done the best he could for his family, and he proceeded to do the best he could for the King. He wrote him letter after letter of advice, and he poured wisdom into Louis's ears at every interview; the letters, indeed, constitute one of Mazarin's chief claims to fame. The Queen-Mother fluttered about him, supervising his nursing and wringing her hands in distress; there is no doubt that she loved him dearly, but it seems that her solicitude worried the poor old man extremely. He showed a brave face throughout his troubles (indeed, a foreign diplomat who saw his rouged cheeks said, 'It is a good copy, but wants the spirit of the original'), made his will and his confession, and died in the odour of sanctity on 9 March 1661. Louis was now master in his own house, able to look

about him and realize what indeed was the heritage of the Bourbons which had descended to him.

It was a France with possibilities. Many of the more obvious weaknesses had been mended during the last fifty years, and more especially by the Treaty of the Pyrenees. Roussillon was now French, for instance and the frontier towards Italy had been rectified, but to the east there were still weaknesses apparent which were only balanced by some of the obvious possibilities of the situation.

Franche Comté, for instance—the free county of Burgundy—was still in Spanish possession, so that Lyon was a frontier town of France, and all the south was open to invasion. In Lorraine, France had a foothold in the form of the three bishoprics—Metz, Toul, and Verdun—which was no present guarantee of safety but only a hint at what might be obtained in the future. The Spanish Netherlands stretched dangerously far inland, bringing the frontier within easy distance of Paris, while seeing that this frontier was, on the Spanish side, guarded by line within line of fortresses, the danger was accentuated. Moreover, on the coast Dunkirk and Mardyke were in English hands, giving England naval bases on both sides of the Channel. In Alsace, Louis ruled over a whole series of bits and fragments of territory, little enclaves set in the midst of imperial domains; they were not very valuable in themselves, but if they could be united together and with Strasburg, the dominant fortress, they would constitute a very effective addition to the kingdom of France. All along the eastern frontier, in fact, the situation seemed to clamour for energetic action.

Internally, too, action was demanded. The King's rule was undisputed. The miseries of the Fronde had

shown France the need for a strong central government, and this and his marriage with Marie Thérèse had raised Louis's prestige very considerably among the people. Moreover, the successful conclusion of the Spanish war had left Louis in unrestricted control of a powerful professional army, well organized and well officered, which would serve to overawe quarrelsome Parliaments and turbulent nobles.

So that he had the means of internal reform to his hands ; and the need for reform was obvious. Financially France was still in a chaotic condition. The national debt had been contracted at a time when the credit of the country was low, and the interest paid was in consequence far too high. Contracts made with the farmers of the taxes seemed to make certain that for years to come only a small proportion of the money ground from the people by crushing taxation would reach the almost empty treasury. Then the moneys that did reach the treasury were disbursed by an administration in which employment was in part hereditary and in part transferable by purchase, but in no way open to talent without influence.

Finally, the state of society in general was not at all such as would merit the approval of a really benevolent despot. Morals were at a low ebb, and corruption was as rampant in private as in public business. Among the upper classes duelling still flourished, despite the efforts of Richelieu and Mazarin. Now that they were deprived of the excitement of private war they had turned for diversion to gambling, and enormous sums were being lost and won over card-tables and at dice. Sexual immorality was too common for comment.

The example was infectious, and the vices of the *noblesse* seemed likely to permeate through the lower strata of society. The absurd convention which

deprived a gentleman of his coat armour should he indulge in trade not only kept commerce deprived of much capital but also weeded selectively the successful business men out of acting affairs.

For this state of affairs Mazarin and Richelieu are to be blamed as much as feudal tradition. They had both done much for the Crown and a great deal for France, but neither of them had done anything for the French. The Peace of the Pyrenees was a great achievement for Mazarin, but it is also a measure of his achievement. Of internal policy he had none ; indeed, had Mazarin not died when he did, to be followed by ministers of different outlook, he might be remembered not as the man who ended the Spanish war and completed the discomfiture of the nobility, but as the man who bankrupted France and imperilled the dynasty. The French Revolution might have been ushered in by the Treaty of the Pyrenees instead of by the Treaty of Paris.

France would be content with an autocratic monarch if only he would give her financial reform and a strong government ; a spirited and successful foreign policy was desirable but not essential. It remained to be seen whether Louis would strike the correct balance between the two—whether he would initiate reforms and give them a fair start in life by peaceful economy, or whether he would not be able to withstand the temptations which dangled so tantalizingly just the other side of his frontiers. /

To the unseeing eye it seemed as if the greater part of Mazarin's mantle had fallen upon the shoulders of the Superintendent of the Finances—Fouquet. A century during which the less resplendent parts of the royal duties had been carried out by Sully, by d'Ancre, by Richelieu, and Mazarin, had made every



CARDINAL MAZARIN

From an Engraving after the Painting by Mignard

one certain that no King of France would reign without a chief minister. And Fouquet was a very splendid man indeed ; he spent money on his own concerns like water ; he built himself a palace at Vaux exceeding in beauty and magnificence any place owned by the King ; his entertainments were on an oriental scale of splendour ; his money and his good looks and his good address won him a place in the hearts of many of the beauties of the court. Life for Fouquet, Marquis de Belle-Isle and Vicomte de Vaux, was one long, continuous stream of delirious pleasure.

Delirious indeed. Fouquet was living in a fool's paradise. He could not bring himself to believe that the King would ever inquire as to the source of the millions which he was spending so lavishly. He could not imagine that he could lose the support and friendship of the lords and ladies whose gambling losses he had paid. Stranger still, he did not realize the danger in which he stood from the envy and the ambition of his inferiors in the royal service.

Those long talks which had taken place between Mazarin and the King just before the former's death bore fruit. Mazarin had warned Louis against Fouquet and he had brought to the royal notice his private intendant, Colbert. Colbert had been in charge of Mazarin's financial affairs, and as estimates of Mazarin's fortune range up to as much as twenty millions sterling, there was sufficient proof to hand of Colbert's efficiency. On Mazarin's death Colbert entered the service of the King.

Colbert was a man apparently more than human in some respects and less than human in others. He was of a harshness and incorruptibility extraordinary in that age. His duty was his god ; as Mazarin's intendant he had conceived it necessary to abet his

master's speculations to the limit of his power, but now that he was in the King's service it was his duty to put down speculation. Extravagance and wanton expenditure were hateful to him ; so were dalliance and gallantry ; so was inefficiency. All things considered, he could find sufficient motive for planning Fouquet's removal, quite apart from the fact that he would probably receive Fouquet's office when it fell vacant.

With deadly precision he unravelled the tangled accounts which Fouquet presented, and revealed Fouquet's thefts and misappropriations to the King. It took time to convince Louis of Fouquet's guilt, but Colbert persisted—at Louis's request, be it understood—and Louis eventually came to a decision.

There were other influences at work upon the King. He most cordially hated being outshone by Fouquet ; he disliked having at the head of his exchequer a man he himself had not appointed ; he was coming to believe in Colbert's financial schemes, but he could not try them until Colbert was in Fouquet's place. Memoirists darkly hint that there was another and more potent motive. They say that Fouquet was Louis's rival—his successful rival, moreover—for the kindnesses of too many women. They say that Fouquet had been looked upon with a more than friendly eye by La Vallière and by Henrietta d'Orleans—two ladies who will appear in another chapter—but there is probably little truth in the statement. Indeed, it seems unlikely Fouquet and La Vallière had ever set eyes on each other. The rivalry between King and superintendent, if there was any, must have been over the very much more casual objects of Louis's admiration.

It took some time for Louis to nerve himself to strike the blow. He hesitated. He paid Fouquet the

honour of visiting Vaux ; he paid him the further honour of borrowing a million livre from him. Then at last he made his plans. Fouquet, beginning to have his suspicions of the King's intentions, designed to save himself by armed rebellion, but Colbert and Louis were too quick for him. Louis set out with Fouquet on a tour of inspection of the sea-coast. A messenger from Fouquet's governor of Belle-Isle was captured, and although he died under torture rather than divulge his message, the very fact of his being sent was suspicious. D'Artagnan, the fourth of the Three Musketeers, received his orders from Louis and from Colbert. Fouquet was arrested at Nantes ; his property and his papers were seized, and, after a trial lasting for months and conducted with the utmost venom, he was sentenced to banishment. Louis himself altered the sentence to one of perpetual solitary confinement.

Fouquet survived sixteen years in various fortresses, but during the last two years Louis was kind enough to allow him various privileges—visits from his family, the use of pens and ink, a different book to read every day. Then Fouquet died, and every one, probably Fouquet himself included, was greatly relieved. But from the moment of his arrest Louis was free from the last check upon his power, and Colbert was free to carry out his schemes for the reorganization of France. It only remained to see how much Colbert's schemes were worth—especially when Louis was there to influence their execution.

CHAPTER V

LA VALLIÈRE

FOUQUET spent sixteen years in prison largely because of Louis's intense hatred of powerful ministers and of powerful nobles—a hatred resulting from his memories of the disorders of the Fronde and of the ministry of Mazarin. Louis felt confident that never again would a minister climb to power at his expense, but he did not feel nearly so sure yet about the nobility. The habit and tradition of rebellion were still strong, and Louis had not yet had experience of the security which is conferred by a standing army of professional soldiers. Something had to be done to render the nobility impotent, and in course of time a scheme was evolved.

It may have been a deliberate creation of Louis's brain, but that is to be doubted; it may have been suggested to him by Mazarin before the latter's death, but so many schemes have been attributed to Mazarin's last years. It may have been slowly developed, almost inevitably, as a result of changing circumstances. However it was, it was undoubtedly effective.

Briefly, Louis proceeded to draw the nobility round him in a court of unprecedented splendour and formality. Up to this period it was the custom for the large landowners to pass a good deal of their time on their estates, and to supervise their management and generally to be in close contact with their tenants. But steadily from 1660 onwards this custom died away. Life at court became the fashion; no gentleman of birth considered he was living at all if he was not with the King and the crowd around him. This was

hardly surprising, seeing that wit and intellect were summoned to the royal presence and adequately pensioned on condition of staying there. The successors of the artists Richelieu and Mazarin had encouraged thronged the precincts of the palace, and with the centring of intellectual life about the King fashionable life followed—or the other way about ; each of course reacted upon the other.

The enormous expense of life at court, gambling losses, and decline of rents consequent upon lack of supervision completed the business. With a place about the King went a pension, and very soon a large proportion of the nobility was dependent for the necessities of life (or at least for what they believed to be the necessities of life) upon their place at court. After the lapse of a generation the nobles were by tradition, by habit, and by sheer necessity firmly attached to the King and quite out of touch with the provinces. They could no longer raise armies among their tenantry, and if they were to, they would certainly lose place and pension—all that life held dear. So that instead of intriguing for provinces and thrones the courtiers now intrigued for places, for increases of pension, for the reversion of some court office. The news of a death at court sped like a Stock Exchange rumour nowadays, and was instantly followed by a tumultuous flood of applications for the vacant post. To get near the King, to catch his eye in hope of preferment, to toady to the great, to oust rivals, to follow, or, happily, to anticipate, freaks of fashion—these were now the heights of the ambition of the nobility.

There was, however, one other outlet for their energies, and that was in the army. The tradition which surrounds the monarch with a bodyguard of

noble birth—the tradition which to this day causes the English Household Cavalry to be addressed in their first order on parade as ‘Gentlemen of the Life Guards’—was in France a very living tradition. The household regiments of France were full of the nobility, and they were largely expanded in the early years of Louis’s reign. It was quite usual for men of gentle birth to serve two or three years in the ranks of one of the crack regiments. The system gave Louis some squadrons of very dashing horse, but it is very doubtful if it was worth the trouble. The Household Cavalry was very expensive and not very efficient—it could not be disciplined with sufficient rigidity to become of great use in those days of close order, and, as is well known, it failed when sent against the strictly disciplined and well-trained Prussian and Danish cavalry handled by Marlborough.

So military service was the only duty assumed by the nobility, and that was only taken very lightly. Its pastimes were more varied, for Louis was a skilful deviser of fêtes, and was passionately fond of dancing and of gambling. The life of the court grew still gayer and more lavish.

At this period the court received a valuable recruit. She was not a particularly beautiful young woman, but she was witty and artistic and full of life and energy, as well she might be, seeing she was sister of Charles II of England. Louis had chosen her as a bride for his brother Orleans. At first Henrietta had made little impression, but once she had become infected by the laughter-loving, light-hearted atmosphere of St. Germain and Versailles she came out of her shell, she cast aside the memory of the weary years of exile, and speedily blossomed into the life and soul of the court.

Louis had seen her often enough before, when

Charles had been 'on his travels', but had not been greatly attracted. But now it was a different story, seeing the change that had come over her. Orleans, her husband, was rather a gloomy individual, taciturn and moody, with strong military tastes and a passion for hunting—exceedingly like his father, in other words. Henrietta did not mind; she did not exert herself to please him half as much as she laboured to please other people round her. Soon more than one man was being covertly pointed at as her lover, while there was a more significant whisper still. People began to hint that Louis himself was growing over-fond of his sister-in-law.

Without a doubt, Louis was greatly interested in her. But he would risk no scandal. There had been scandal enough over Marie de Mancini, largely because her sister had previously been his mistress. There would be far more scandal if the rumour ran that he had taken as mistress his own brother's wife; furthermore, his brother of Orleans was the most powerful noble in the land, and it would be unsafe to offend him. Three-quarters of the rebellions of the last century had been headed by a Duke of Orleans.

Something had to be done. Louis was not content to worship from afar. He had soon tired of his lacklustre wife, and, moreover, with the birth of the Dauphin not very far off, the situation was more tense than usual. Henrietta was everything that Marie-Louise was not—dark, high-spirited, witty, enticing, lively, dazzling. But there are certain disadvantages about being a king. It is difficult to arrive at the loved one's side without a good many people knowing about it. Mistresses did not count for much; the King was expected to maintain one or two, in remembrance of the tradition of Henry IV

and his predecessors. Yet Louis could not be sure that France would stomach incest quite as easily—in fact, the information at his disposal seemed to point to the reverse. It was accordingly necessary to find a means of concealment, a method of deceiving the court as to what was going on.

Either Louis or Henrietta devised a brilliant scheme whereby Louis could always be at Henrietta's side without rousing suspicion. He had only to pretend to be in love with one of Henrietta's ladies. No sooner thought of than done.

Louis dallied lightly over his choice. Henrietta had several suitable ladies of honour, but in the end Louis selected almost the least conspicuous—Louise de la Baume le Blanc, better known, perhaps, under her later title of Duchesse de la Vallière. There was nothing very striking about her—M. Bertrand goes so far as to say she looked like a thin sheep—and none of her portraits, not even the most flattering, give us the impression of any kind of forceful personality. Her best feature was her complexion, as white as milk. She was a very pale blonde, blue-eyed, heavy-lidded, large-mouthed, with a slight limp. One felt instinctively that she would be grateful for attention, ready to give her all for love, easily wounded, shy, retiring, and tender-hearted.

Louis's attentions to her had the effect one might have expected. Very little time had passed before Louise was passionately and blindly in love with him. Louis had to indulge her, as otherwise his schemes with regard to Henrietta would have come to naught. Then, too, Henrietta turned out not to be greatly enamoured of the King's Majesty. Two of the really skilled lovers of the court, Vardes and de Guiche, competed more successfully for her affections. Louis



TWO MINIATURES OF LOUISE DE V. VALLIÈRE

was piqued and annoyed. He was still young enough to wish to be loved for himself alone, and he found little satisfaction in being admitted to Henrietta's arms solely because he was King of France. Louise's whole-hearted, frantic affection touched him at a moment when he was sadly out of humour with himself. Before very long people left off whispering about him and Henrietta; Louise had become Duchesse de la Vallière, with the tabouret—that mystic footstool which gave longed-for precedence as well as the right to sit on certain occasions in the royal presence—and the court all knew what that meant.

To Louis the affair did not seem so important as it did to La Vallière, which was hardly surprising, seeing that at the time he was deep in his schemes for the uprooting of Fouquet, for the establishment of Colbert's system, and for the aggrandizement of France. Louise to him was some sort of pleasant relief in the intervals of strenuous statecraft. He was delicately flattered by her affection; it gave him a better opinion of himself as a man than Henrietta's treatment of him would warrant. But he could hardly contrive to raise a grand passion for her. She was too yielding, too prone to deliver herself up at the first summons; she was too much in love with him for him to be in love with her.

Henrietta accepted the situation philosophically. One can imagine her shrugging her shoulders lightly as she turned away again from Louis and found amusement elsewhere. Soon there was hardly any breath of scandal regarding her and the King—jointly. Louis himself, once he was fairly involved with Louise, had little time or motive to stray farther.

For the trammels of kingship enmeshed him sadly. There was a very involved and dignified etiquette

developing at court, which will be more fully discussed later. For the present it is sufficient to say that the King's going to bed was a solemn function attended with the utmost ceremony, as was his rising up in the morning. The palace arrangements left him with little choice as regards where he was to sleep: he must either sleep in his own room or in his wife's. These bonds of etiquette were not to be lightly broken; Louis's court system, and consequently a large part of the fabric of government, depended upon them. To vary them would be an indication that other variations were possible, that the Throne itself was not permanent—to say nothing of vested interests which had immediately developed as soon as the distribution of functions was completed.

Moreover, so imbued was Louis with the notion of the divinity of kings that he was disposed to honour his wife because she had been so incredibly fortunate as to be singled out by God to be his wife. Because of that he must do his duty to her. It was a matter even as binding as any point of etiquette. Between Louise and Marie-Louise he had little surplus energy at present to carry him farther from the strait and narrow way.

In addition, Louis would do nothing to lessen the dignity of his wife in the eyes of the world. He would not be openly unfaithful to her, if he could help it. It must be remembered that for a King the expression 'openly unfaithful' is rather different from that of a private person. Every one could know about it; it could be a matter of gossip and discussion; people could toady to the King's mistress in the hope of vicarious royal favour; but as long as no official notice was taken of the matter, and as long as the King's mistress, as mistress, had no place in the palace

etiquette, Louis considered that he was not being openly unfaithful to his wife nor doing anything derogatory to her dignity. It took some years to convince him that there was a fallacy in this argument.

Until then the love-affair of Louis and Louise was a very hole-and-corner business. Their meetings took place by stealth, and no public notice was taken when domestic affairs called Louise from her place at court. She carried out her court duties until the last possible moment, bore her children privately in some house bought for the purpose by the King, and returned to court again unostentatiously. To Colbert, along with the business management of France, was entrusted the arrangement of these affairs, the furnishing of the house, the engagement of servants and doctors, the registration of the birth, and the finding of foster-parents for the children.

But at length circumstances arose to interfere with the secrecy of the King's adultery. Malicious people told the Queen about it; there was more scandal and argument than the King could bear; official action had to be taken; the King in his discussions with his ministers had to take notice of Louise's existence and had to admit tacitly the extent of his relations with her. As soon as that was done there was of course, an end to the idea of preserving the dignity of the Queen, and it became much more important to consider the bolstering up of that of the King. No king worthy of the title could possibly plead guilty to clandestine adultery with an untitled woman of no rank worth mentioning; it would be too undignified. The only thing to do was to surround the unsavoury business with all the pomp and circumstance possible. So Louise became Duchesse de la Vallière, with the tabouret, and precedence over nearly every lady of

the court. By her appointment to the ranks of the Queen's ladies of honour Louis had already assured for her a position at court near him, and had made it possible for her to accompany the Queen—and therefore the King—wherever ladies could go.

Yet already, despite the titles and the dignities, there had been murmurings of trouble, and as soon as the King's entanglement had been officially recognized he was free, of course, to begin another private unfaithfulness. He found Louise de la Vallière terribly boring, despite the new glamour of a coronet. She was too yielding and too much in love. Once he had found pleasure in her protestations of passion, and had taken pride in being adored for himself alone. Ease of conquest brought rapidity of surfeit. Her attraction for him had been largely founded on her love for him, and once he was assured of this, once he was quite certain that she loved him and would always love him (and she told him so whenever possible) there was no motive for further pains on his part. Louis began by losing interest, and lack of interest changed in the end to positive distaste.

Once before, when the affair had only just passed its height, Louise had fled from court and taken refuge in a convent. Louis had noticed some other girl at court with a regard less than chaste, or he had spoken hastily to Louise, or had hurt her feelings in some other way. Whatever it was, Louis and his astonished court heard that Louise had fled to the convent of Chaillot. Whether or not there was an ulterior motive for the action it is hard to say, but it certainly brought Louis instantly to her side. He was not ready yet to lose her, and certainly it was not agreeable to a king's dignity to be deserted by his mistress. Any desertion that took place should be on his side, of

course. And the scandal ! Louis could not face that. But first and foremost he had not yet had his fill of her tenderness and affection, and her flight called forth from him one of those sudden quixotic acts which were on several other occasions to puzzle his court and confound his ministers. With only three attendants he rode over to the convent and persuaded her to return with him. There occurred one of those hysterical reconciliations which usually indicate that there is more yet to be reconciled about.

It was so in this case. Mme la Marquise de Montespan was occupying a good deal of the royal attention. She was everything that La Vallière was not—dark, beautiful, witty, brilliant, and seemingly inaccessible. The King's eye roved more and more in her direction, and Louise of course was aware of this at the same time as she became aware of the cooling of his affection. She bore it for a long time without further action, hoping against hope, and seeing her false friends dropping away from her and hastening to pay their respects to the new favourite. Her meekness was astonishing. She made no scenes ; she made no desperate fight for power. She asked nothing for herself, and very little for her friends and relatives. When the King set out on his first serious campaign of aggression she suffered herself and Montespan to be named as the ladies of honour to accompany the Queen, so that Marie Thérèse, Montespan, and La Vallière rode together in the same carriage, and the simple peasants came trooping in from the country-side to view the ' three queens '.

By 1668 Montespan had attained full measure of the royal favour, and La Vallière fled once more to Chaillot. This time it was not the King who came to persuade her to return—it was Colbert ; and along

with Colbert came the officer of the King's guard with a threat to bring her back by force. Louis still could not spare her. Again he realized that it was not in any way compatible with the royal dignity that the King should be deserted by his mistress—it was the royal prerogative to bring these affairs to an end. Then Louise was still useful ; she was *maitresse-en-titre*, even though she had long since ceased to perform the more private duties of that office. As such, Louis fondly supposed, she would tend to check gossip about him and Montespan, for the latter had a husband who was raising incredible objections, and the pamphleteers of foreign countries (not of France, of course) were writing of Louis's little peccadilloes with a venom and a ferocity which was finding the joints of Louis's armour far too frequently for his comfort. Besides, now that court etiquette had gradually been adjusted for La Vallière's benefit it would be inconvenient, to say the least, to have her drop out without warning.

Back came La Vallière to court, to bear, year after year, the sneers of the courtiers, the cross-grained displeasure of the Queen, the open triumph of Montespan, and the coldness of the King. It was not until 1675 that she could make an end of the whole unpleasant business. In that year she took the veil in due form, in the presence of the Queen and the court—a proceeding which gave colour to Louis's contention that it was he who was dismissing La Vallière, and not La Vallière who was dismissing him. With the generosity with other people's property which distinguishes autocrats, he begged her to accept the position of abbess in some wealthy and not too strict convent, and to secure for herself a comfortable old age, but she would not. For some time past she had been turning more and more to religion as a solace for her

troubles ; now she took her vows with the Carmelites, the strictest Order open to her, and she entered the convent in the Rue St. Jacques as a professed nun in June 1675. She lived on there for thirty-five years, poor woman !

CHAPTER VI

THE STATE

FOUQUET had fallen. He had been hurried off to Vincennes, and his papers were seized by the Royal Intendants. They had been handed over to Colbert, who found in them much to ponder over. Rumour runs that among them were letters from various fine ladies of the court—letters, especially, from La Vallière and from Henrietta d'Orleans. Such things would not matter to Colbert, for he was far too cold-blooded and intent upon finance to be interested in the fact that he held in his hands proofs of a dozen love-affairs which were intriguing the court.

What did matter was that he held also proofs of Fouquet's wrong-doing, and of the wrong-doing of most of his assistants. Peculation, corruption, and bribery had been rampant throughout the French fiscal system. France was staggering to bankruptcy under the blows dealt her by these thieves. Colbert was moved to instant action; not only could he punish theft but at the same time he could refill the depleted national treasury.

A Chamber of Justice was specially appointed to deal with the offenders. It was far more of a chamber of poetic justice. The letter of the law was continually violated by its findings and sentences, but appeal from them was only to the King, who was himself dictating its decisions. Nobody was very anxious to hang the financiers; what was most wanted was their money. Colbert squeezed them and squeezed them, with a loving care. Some were lucky and escaped from France with their portable property, but the majority

was not so fortunate. There was no haste about the business ; the market was not flooded by the estates and pictures and jewellery which came into it, for Colbert would not allow that to happen. He took his time.

Bit by bit the speculators and the tax farmers and the financiers were stripped of everything they possessed. Money poured in in rivers. The wretched tax-gatherers had no friends ; they belonged to a friendless class. The brutal injustice dealt out to them was generally applauded, and actually strengthened Louis's position. So huge were the sums of money extorted that soon Colbert was able to arrange for a slight remission of taxation and to display with pride to his master a treasury full to overflowing. Louis soon found uses for the money. Some of it went in presents to the courtiers who already were spending their way to indigence. Some of it—not much—went to La Vallière and her family. Some of it went to the army.

Across the Channel, Charles II was beginning to settle himself comfortably in the throne of his fathers. It was a throne haloed by the laurels won by the Commonwealth, with the successes of the Dutch war, the triumph of Blake, the victory of the Dunes. His wife had brought him Tangier as a dower ; Cromwell had won Dunkirk for him. Charles, extravagant, needy, and likely not to be on good terms with his Parliaments, found these two acquisitions—the one a sentinel over the Straits of Gibraltar, the other over the Straits of Dover—vastly expensive to keep up. A man of Charles's ability could hardly underestimate the strategic value of Dunkirk, especially if (as was obviously probable) hostilities were to be renewed with the Dutch ; but Charles also foresaw that it was

a continental entanglement which might certainly lead to trouble. He wanted money, and he did not want Dunkirk. Louis gave him money and took Dunkirk in exchange, thereby obtaining the port from which sailed later Jean Bart and Duguay Trouin. It was a bloodless acquisition very gratifying to France and to Louis ; the men who most regretted it were Monk and the English sailors who were to be hampered by the absence of a cross-Channel base in the approaching war.

Already because of Louis a certain liveliness had displayed itself in the circles of European diplomacy. He had written to his ambassadors insisting on their taking precedence over those of Spain, and the Spanish ambassadors showed no sign of yielding. Louis's orders were peremptory, and they resulted in a pitched battle being fought in the streets of London between the suites of the French and Spanish ambassadors on the occasion of the arrival there of a Swedish envoy. D'Estrades, the Frenchman, lost the battle. His carriage was overturned, his followers scattered, and he himself had to run for his life, while the victorious Spanish ambassador took his place in the procession. Louis was furious. D'Estrades was dismissed—not because of the brawl, but because of his defeat—and a message was sent to Madrid demanding precedence for France under threat of war—one year only after the Peace of the Pyrenees. Philip IV yielded : precedence was not worth the blood and treasure which it would cost to take up France's challenge, and Louis had won his first diplomatic victory.

Next year the French ambassador in another capital was involved in another brawl. Dissension broke out between the ambassador at Rome and the Pope's Corsican guard ; blood was shed, and the ambassador retired from Rome clamouring for ven-

geance. Louis acted promptly. He seized Avignon and began to form an army for the invasion of the Papal States. Alexander, astonished and frightened, hastened to make what amends he could, but the terms granted him were more severe than any one expected. He had to dismiss from his service his own brother, who was alleged to have been the cause of the riot, to disband his Corsicans, and to erect in Rome a permanent monument commemorating his humiliation. It was hardly the treatment a Pope could expect of the eldest son of the Church.

The following year a little secret expedition sailed into Lisbon. It was a party of officers under the command of Schomberg (whose name we will meet later in a very different connexion), and the ships that brought him were loaded with the gold which Colbert had wrung from the Intendants. Twenty-three years ago the Portuguese had risen against Spain and had proclaimed John of Braganza King of Portugal, and the struggle had gone on ever since, in the languid fashion of early Peninsular campaigns. But French gold brought new strength to the failing Portuguese arms, and Schomberg and his men brought a saner direction of the starving Portuguese armies. In 1665 French-trained Portuguese won the battle of Villa Viciosa, and the treaty of Lisbon recognized Portuguese independence. Louis had succeeded in planting a thorn in the Spanish side. That he had done so at a time when he was nominally at peace with Spain did not trouble him much. Incidentally, he had provided a base which the English were to use successfully against him forty years later, and which a century later still was to be the starting-point of the campaigns of Wellington against the man who was to carry Louis's schemes to their logical (and illogical) climax.

France was obviously stirring. The more high-spirited of her people were spoiling for a fight. Louis at first found employment for them in minor campaigns in which France still was not directly involved. Yet another personal squabble led to the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Turkey—the Most Christian King had been in nominal alliance with the Grand Turk since the days of Francis I—and a stream of French volunteers flowed into Crete, where the Venetians were struggling against the dogged attacks launched by Kiuprili. They met with little success there, but when Achmet Kiuprili burst into Hungary at the head of two hundred thousand men Louis authorized the entrance of an army corps of Frenchmen into the service of the Emperor. Montecuculli, the one imperialist general of that generation with any claims to greatness, made the best use of them. He forced Kiuprili into accepting battle beside the river Raab, broke up the Turkish formation with his dexterous manoeuvres, and sent the French cavalry hurtling into the disorderly Turkish lines. The wild valour of the hot-headed French horse decided the day, and the Turks fled the field. Significantly, however, the emperor saw in the victory not an opportunity for the reconquest of Turkish Hungary, but merely one for making peace. He was not at all inclined to lay himself under any further obligation to Louis.

Indeed, Europe was beginning to regard France with grave suspicion. She was showing signs of becoming too powerful and ambitious, and her neighbours were feeling uncomfortable. The 'spirited foreign policy' of Louis had shown her willingness to strike, and Colbert seemed to be supplying her with the ability to do so.

Colbert, on Fouquet's fall, had assumed with the

title of Controller-General of Finance the responsibility under Louis for the whole management of the civil administration of the country. The Augean stable of finance clamoured for attention. For a while the money extorted arbitrarily from the financiers had eased the situation. It had eased the situation brought about by the bad harvests of 1660-1, and it had purchased Dunkirk and supplied Schomberg. But it would not last for ever. Further steps had to be taken to utilize the national income.

The policy of Mazarin had bequeathed to France a whole series of debts in the form of annuities, perpetual and otherwise, which, having been sold at a time when the government credit was at its lowest, had demanded rates of interest unnaturally high. Colbert turned upon these. Many of them he redeemed at prices far below their current value—naturally in defiance of the protests of the holders. At first he acted solely by the aid of royal decrees, although later he disguised the apparent injustice of his actions by the institution of a court of arbitration, which arbitrated in accordance with his wishes. The interest on much of the debt was reduced without any offer of redemption. By the time Colbert had dealt with the fund-holders the national debt was reduced by eight millions of livres without the employment of a *sou* from the pockets of the taxpayers. This was, as might be expected, the beginning of Colbert's vast unpopularity, for the French *rentier* then as now had a voice which made itself heard in no uncertain terms. Nevertheless, such was the obvious justice and necessity of the arrangement that French credit was in no way lessened.

Next came a more difficult problem. The system of the imposition and collection of taxes was the result of a slow growth since the time of Charlemagne.

Direct taxation could only be applied to persons who were not noble and to property which was considered never to have been in the possession of a noble. Indirect taxation was collected with difficulty owing to the lack of supervision; and supervision was difficult to arrange because every official held his office as a right and not as a favour: he had purchased it, or his father or his grandfather before him had purchased it. Every office held was a national debt, owed on precise terms which made it just as hard to interfere with an official's functions as with his pay. Colbert did his best with a bad business, but it gradually grew obvious that it would take at least one generation to improve the civil service. Time and peace were what Colbert required most, and after these an ample supply of money for the re-purchase of offices in the same fashion as any other redemption of debt. Colbert in the event found he had too little time, and less peace, while Louis left him with no money at all. Colbert was only able to bring about a few reforms in the fiscal arrangements—enough to make the wheels of state grind lumbering round for another hundred and twenty years.

The need for yet another reform was clamouring for attention, and Colbert took this in hand at the same time. This was the codification of the law—a matter of urgent necessity seeing that there were all sorts of tribunals distributed all over the country, largely relics of the old feudal custom by which the *seigneur* had the right to administer justice, from many of which there was no appeal, while the laws they administered were a heterogeneous collection varying with each province as a result of the successive conquest of the different parts of France. The council which Colbert called together did its work rapidly if

not very efficiently, and before a year was out Louis issued on their findings his *Ordonnance Civile*, which pulled together the lumbering mass of civil law. A criminal code followed, and many of the local jurisdictions were swept away. The codification did not cut very deep. A good many towns and districts of France, especially those towards the east, had secured to themselves the maintenance of their own laws and customs on the occasion of their annexation to France, and looked with suspicious eye at any interference; the *seigneurs* themselves were not unnaturally offended by any attempt to deprive them of the profitable and power-bestowing right of local jurisdiction. Once again time and money were necessary to bring about a complete reform—and Colbert was denied both. For complete codification, for a sensible arrangement of the civil service and of the administration of justice, France had to wait for a cataclysm which would destroy the vested interests and the hampering effect of old tradition. Colbert's measures, when all is said and done, only postponed the cataclysm. That, however, is praise and not censure.

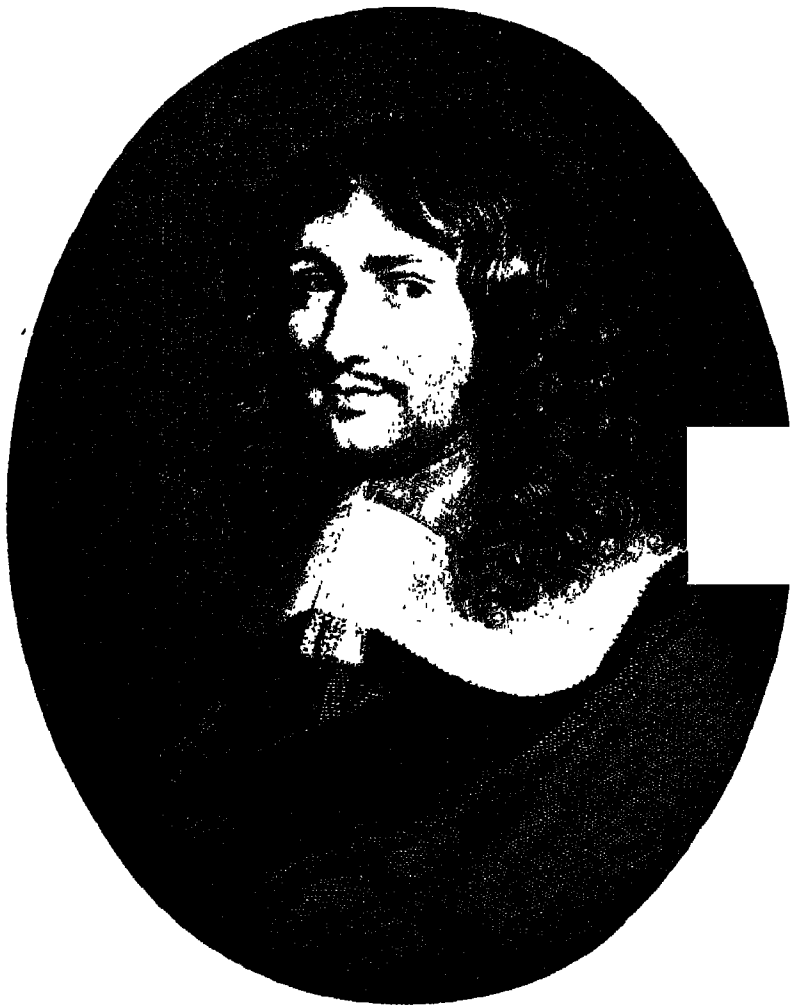
Yet money had to be found somewhere. The taxation receipts were increased to some extent by a strict scrutiny of the lists of the nobility. People who had taken advantage of the troublous times to assume the noble particle—and by that means to avoid direct taxation—were thrust back into the ranks of the commoners, or made to pay well for the privilege of being officially recognized as nobles.

This was, however, only a side-issue. The best way of increasing the national income was to increase the national wealth. Colbert decided to try his hand at this, the ultimate ambition of every statesman. First of all, he extracted from Louis a grudging decree

which announced that in future any noble could engage in trade without sullyng his nobility. It was, of course, the obvious step first to be taken. It would give an outlet for the energy of the nobility and at the same time it would bring capital into trade. It only remained to be seen whether a royal decree would weigh more in the scale than a popular prejudice. As time was to show, it did—but that time factor which intervened naturally spoilt the whole effect. When France was about to plunge into a century and a half of almost unbroken warfare it was nearly hopeless to try and stimulate trade into a quite new activity during the remaining five years of peace.

Colbert, however, did much. He gleaned enough money here and there to enable him to subsidize the decayed weaving industry of France; he advanced substantial sums without interest on every loom in the country; he did his best to popularize the modern developments of agricultural science; he set the factory of the Gobelins in running order again; he purchased the secret of the stocking loom; he began factories for supplying all sorts of goods which had previously been imported; and at the same time he took steps to facilitate their distribution by the roads and canals he proceeded to make.

A certain Riquet, Baron de Bonrepos, had for some time been travelling about in Languedoc, taking measurements, drawing maps, and covering sheets of paper with elaborate calculations. He had some wild idea of connecting the Atlantic with the Mediterranean, and of course everybody regarded him as a hopeless dreamer. He had applied to Mazarin and to Fouquet, but both had rejected his scheme after hardly considering it. Now he came to Colbert, and Colbert was the light. The greatest engineering feat of



COLBERT

From the Engraving by Nanteuil

pre-Revolutionary days was taken in hand. A canal one hundred and fifty miles long was cut from sea to sea, laying open to development two whole backward provinces. Locks, tunnels, sluices—Riquet found means of constructing all of them. The canal of Languedoc must be considered as being proportionately a far greater achievement than the Suez Canal, which was its lineal successor. To Riquet and to Colbert, and through them to Louis, on whom lay the ultimate responsibility, France owes her present economical system of internal communication.

External trade also received the attention of the government. The various companies of the Indies which Richelieu had established, and which had languished into helpless idleness during the Fronde, were re-established and re-capitalized. Louis tried to make it fashionable to invest in them, and succeeded to a great extent. The impulse was given to the great effort of colonization which was maintained during the next century. Then, because the English and Dutch navigation laws pressed heavily on these efforts at expansion, a mercantile marine had to be built and a navy built to protect it. That naval effort demands the attention of a whole chapter; it is sufficient to state at present, as an indication in passing, that letters exist from Colbert to various judges pointing out the need of galley slaves and the consequent advisability of sentencing as many able-bodied men as possible to the galleys; the colony of Canada helped in this matter by kidnapping Red Indians and sending them across the Atlantic to a living death. Colbert was not inhuman; he was his country's servant. It remained to be seen whether this budding mercantile marine would withstand the strain of war with the two strongest naval powers in the world.

All these new national ambitions and efforts combined to turn Colbert's attention to the necessity for protecting them in some way, and here we begin to reach deeper water. Political economy as a science had not yet been born. It had not reached even the point of feeble and immature development to which it has attained in our day. Customs duties were frequently only levied *ad valorem* without distinction of kind, and in cases where an attempt was made to distinguish between various kinds of merchandise the articles singled out for special treatment were subject most often to entire prohibition. Most of the countries of Europe, for instance, had at some period in their history forbidden the export of entire horses, the object being, of course, to hinder the progress of horse-breeding in other countries. Most customs regulations, in fact, were imposed either for the sake of revenue or to injure other countries.

Cause and effect were frequently confused. The amount of gold in a country was regarded as a measure of the national wealth—Gibbon, a century later, had the same idea, and expressed it in *The Decline and Fall*—without regard for the fact that gold is only valuable when it can be exchanged for something else. Occasional crises resulting from lack of currency in those days when gold was scarce convinced statesmen that gold meant prosperity, and nearly every country consequently prohibited gold export, ignoring the obvious rejoinder that a country might be stuffed with gold and yet might starve if prevented from buying corn—to say nothing of the fact that, as Spain discovered, all the regulations and customs officers in the world will not prevent the export of anything if the export is sufficiently profitable.

Colbert found himself—or believed himself to be—

in the dilemma of having to choose between agricultural prosperity and manufacturing prosperity. If every Frenchman began working in factories he would give up working on the land. Then France would have to import food. Then when war came and no food could be imported France would starve. Yet at the same time it was a common experience that more money could be made by manufactures than by agriculture. He wanted ample home food supplies combined with flourishing manufactures—the twin will-o'-the-wisp which had led so many statesmen into the ever-deepening marshes of tariff alterations.

Agriculture was the most ancient and most prosperous of French industries; all the weaving and carpet-making and leather tanning which Colbert was subsidizing were of comparatively new growth and of doubtful future. Colbert decided that it would be best for France to support the doubtful industries at the expense of the successful one. Naturally Colbert must have worded it to himself differently from this—there are a good many (too many) ways in which he could do so—but that is how it worked out. To ensure cheap food for the millions of factory workers he saw in the future he prohibited absolutely the export of corn from France.

The measure had immediate success, but its success was only immediate. The price of a commodity must fall if its market is diminished, and France at that time did a considerable export trade in corn. But it is obviously harmful to an industry to restrict its market; a good harvest in France meant that there must be a surplus which by Colbert's regulation would be of no use, and a bad harvest meant a loss anyway. The restriction in effect imposed on the farmers a kind of 'heads you lose, tails you don't win' wager, and

the result was naturally a refusal in course of time on the farmers' part to grow corn, a refusal carried far enough to ensure a profit on the smaller production, over an average. Colbert's death and the War of the Spanish Succession came in time to prevent the full effect of the measure. If not the next logical step would have been the subsidizing of the farmers to make it profitable to continue growing corn on the old scale, so that manufactures would have been subsidizing agriculture and agriculture subsidizing manufactures with no particular advantage to any one save officials.

Subsidization of manufactures was only a half-measure. The complimentary ordinance arranged for protective tariffs on imports. That was of course in agreement with the obvious argument that protective tariffs will enable the home product to compete with imports in the home market. But the man who pays the duty is the consumer, and eventually the man who is engaged on some profitable employment, so that the protective tariffs were merely another burden laid on the one really profitable industry of France—agriculture. Colbert had yet to discover that prices do not fall of their own free will, and that the protected manufacture will continue to sell at a figure which will just compete with the foreign product, in this fashion presenting the curious anomaly of an industry profitable to a part of the nation and a dead loss to the rest.

Colbert's ideal, of course, was a self-contained nation independent of any other country, growing its own food and making its own articles of utility and luxury, with the obvious corollary that every nation would be the same—although, seeing that some countries are better fitted by nature for agriculture

and others for manufacture, the phenomenon would be witnessed of the former eating good food with the aid of bad knives and forks, and of the latter using excellent knives and forks on bad food, with no attempt at exchanging good food for good knives and forks.

Nevertheless, such was his ideal, and, as an ideal, it was far in advance of the limping, opportunist ideals which had gone before. The next step clearly was to make this self-contained, self-supporting nation as large as possible. The larger the nation, the larger the surplus of the fruits of its labour which could be enjoyed by King, court, and parasites—by all, in other words, who display to other nations the glory of their own. The primitive method of increasing a nation was simply to seize some one else's territory with its population ; but in Colbert's view the resultant profit was not worth the expense of modern war. Colbert thought it would be better simply to increase population by natural means.

So the begetting of children was added to the list of subsidized industries. Colbert aimed high. The two-child family was not yet much in evidence in France ; Colbert's ideal was a family of *ten* children. The father of ten found himself exempted from *taille*, although even fewer children brought with them some degree of immunity. Early marriage was encouraged by monetary reward. Bachelors were subjected to considerable pressure. A whole stream of edicts was poured forth during the years 1666-7 encouraging Frenchmen to produce more and yet more Frenchmen ; Frenchmen to drive the plough, to tend the loom, to pay taxes to support Louis's court ; Frenchmen (said the militarists, rubbing their hands in secret) who would shoulder a musket when Louis sent forth his armies on their inevitable career of conquest.

Such was the fashion of Colbert's reforms. They are the flourish of trumpets which usher in the period of benevolent despotism. They take for granted the utmost wisdom on the part of the governing body and complete lack of self-help on the part of the rest of the nation. They do much for the country and nothing for the people. They help a man to start a stocking loom, but they give no protection if it be the King's whim to shut him in the Bastille for the rest of his life, or to hale him into the army to fight in a war he knows nothing of, or to billet soldiers upon him with licence to do as they like until he changes his religion.

At the same time they call for continual meddling with people's private affairs on the part of the government. Under Colbert's regime a strict inquiry was carried on into every branch of every one's activity, from the age at which he proposed to marry to the number of hands employed in his mill. Colbert's ideal was a State wherein every one would busy himself only about duties given him by a government which would keep him busy, and where every one would spend his earnings only in accordance with directions from the King in council.

There was a certain amount of novelty about this ideal, although kings before Louis had aimed at similar ones. At that very time the Great Elector was carrying out similar designs in Brandenburg, beginning a Prussian tradition which was added to by all his successors, and which eventually resulted in the Prussia of to-day—and more especially in the Prussia of yesterday. Yet although the Hohenzollerns had far less promising material to work upon than had the Bourbons, Frederick the Great's contemporary was Louis XV.

To enable Colbert's reforms to take a firm root there were two essential conditions to be observed. One was the enforcement of a rigid economy, and the other was the maintenance of peace as far as practicable. To Louis, in 1667, there were offered two possible policies. One was the dull, uninteresting, apparently inglorious one of economy and of slow development—of limited court expenses and of restricted royal pomp; by this means the place-holders could gradually be bought out and replaced by more efficient administrators, the still tangled national debt could be straightened out and reduced, the infant industries given a chance to reach maturity, and the country could settle down to a *bourgeois* and commercial but comfortable prosperity. This was the course Colbert would have chosen had the choice and the opportunity lain with him.

There was another course open. By this glory could be attained by the old-fashioned and time-honoured means. The nearly defenceless provinces on the eastern frontier of France could be conquered; Italy might be overrun and forced to acknowledge the supremacy of the French King; Louis might even go down to posterity as the monarch who gave France that frontier of the Rhine which had been so urgently desired since the days of Philip Augustus. It would cost a great deal both in blood and in treasure, and the advantages ensuing were not as obvious as they might be—but what advantage could possibly be greater than the recognition of the King of France as Prince Paramount of Europe? Henry IV had acknowledged that his ambition was to know that there was a chicken in every pot in France every Sunday. Surely any sensible Frenchman would rather have an empty pot as long as the Emperor admitted that the King of

France was his better ! Yet it did not matter very much what the sensible Frenchman thought ; the main question was whether Louis himself would rather his subjects ate chicken on Sundays or that the Emperor admitted a grudging vassalage.

Colbert was following in the footsteps of Mazarin and Richelieu, and endeavouring to do his best for France without doing very much for the French. It remained to be seen whether Louis would permit him to act unhandicapped, or whether instead he would choose to sacrifice both France and the French for the personal glory of the French King.

CHAPTER VII

FIRST BLOOD

AT this stage of the development of the situation a new figure appears on the scene. This was a young man of twenty-five, François Michel le Tellier, Marquis de Louvois. His father was that Le Tellier who had been for some years minister of war both under Mazarin's administration and under these few years of Louis's personal rule. The fantastic condition by which offices were handed down from father to son now made young François Michel minister of war when his father was appointed chancellor. On this occasion, however, there was nothing very strange about the appointment, for Louvois had been carefully trained under his father's eye for the position, and he was brimful of ideas and of enthusiasm. Louvois, in fact, was to prove in a brief time that he was of that peculiarly rare class of mankind—the perfect war minister. He takes rank with Carnot, with Napoleon, with von Roon.

Louvois had a whole series of notions about how war should be conducted, some of them original, and some of them based on deductions made from developments whose significance had escaped less attentive minds. Turenne—the great Turenne, the victor at the Dunes and at Zusmarshausen—had done his best to fill Louvois's mind with his ideas. Louvois had learned how Tilly's desperate cavalry charges had shattered themselves against the solid infantry of Sweden. He had seen how the triumphant discipline of Cromwell's infantry had taken the Ironsides through the Spanish centre at the Dunes. Even in the hour

of defeat, at Rocroi, the Spanish infantry had covered themselves with glory by their repulse of the French cavalry led by d'Enghien himself. Louvois was convinced of the importance of discipline, and of an infantry which could manœuvre steadily under any circumstances.

All the lessons of the Thirty Years' War had been to the effect that discipline, nevertheless, was a frail bond. It lost its hold if the soldiers were badly fed or badly treated, and more especially if they plundered or straggled. Even Gustavus's splendid Swedes had degenerated when they lived on the country through which they marched. The only way to preserve discipline in an army on campaign was to feed it regularly from a base, to hold it together all the time it was in the field, and to see that the men were properly clothed and housed.

It involved a revolution in army management. It involved the creation of a practically new quartermaster-general's department at the ministry of war, the training of a commissariat staff, the rigid supervision of the supplies sent in by the contractors, the complete alteration of the mental outlook of the regimental officers, the provision of fortresses to act as bases on all the possible routes of attack, and hence a new study of the future theatres of war, the planning of military roads, and a myriad other details which might have appalled any one with less capacity for work and attention to detail than Louvois possessed. Louvois carried through the whole tremendous task.

Having made discipline possible, the next step was to see that it was developed. Louvois was fortunate in that the military tastes of the people assured a steady supply of the best class of recruits to the ranks of the army. The long war with Spain had given the

French a distinct sense of nationality which was rare at that time. A Frenchman was proud of being French in a manner very different from a German's pride at being German or a Walloon's at being Spanish—even if the Walloon admitted being Spanish. This pride of nationality was substituted, by Louvois, as a mainspring of discipline, for the religious fervour of the Swedes and the Ironsides or the professional rigidity of the Dutch and the Brandenburgers. As a figure-head of patriotism he had an ideal personality—a young king who was a splendid horseman, of royal bearing and presence, already surrounded by an aura of semi-divinity. Little wonder, then, that Louvois was able to induce the armies under his charge, well-fed, well-clothed, well-housed, to submit cheerfully to the prolonged and exacting training necessary for the carrying out of his ideas.

The days of hordes and mobs had departed. The musket had developed into a convenient weapon which made its user the most dangerous man on the battlefield. Already the handy invention of the Pyrenean hunters, who fought bears with a hunting knife thrust into their musket-barrel, had begun to attract official attention, and the bayonet had been issued to some French regiments, abolishing the need of backing every musketeer with a pikeman. In this case every pikeman became a musketeer, and to use every musket in the regiment called for formation in line. Previously infantry had fought in column, partly through the need for mingling musketeers and pikemen, and partly because the column was the only formation in which half-trained infantry could manœuvre. Louvois saw to it that his regiments now were trained to fight in line, three deep at most. A few dissentient voices were heard. Gloomy prophets declared that no infantry

would manœuvre in line under fire. It would be possible on parade, perhaps, over level ground, and without the confusion of losses and the possibility of attack, but in the face of the enemy—never. Louvois thought otherwise, and Turenne, who had made tentative experiments with the line towards the close of the last war, backed him up. He admitted that it was more than could be expected for troops to maintain their order when marching at their natural pace and performing complicated evolutions, but at the parade pace it could be done. Consequently the infantry was trained to restrain its ardour and its natural tendency to bunch together or to break up. Movements were to be carried out at eighty steps a minute—slow, solemn, with rigid attention to dressing and alignment.

So began the practical employment of the 'parade step', dignified and unhurried, which for a century was to carry troops of all nations into action. It was to serve its limited purpose very effectively, and was only to receive its death-blow with Kellermann's repulse of the Prussian advance at Valmy a century later. It was to disappear altogether in the field with the appearance of the wild hordes of the French revolutionary armies, and nowadays is only to be seen on occasions of great ceremonial—one can see it done annually by the Guards at the trooping of the colour, and the 'goose-step' performed by the German troops in the Grande Place at Brussels, and which could be seen every minute before the war in German garrison towns whenever a private saluted an officer, is another survival.

Reorganization went further than this. The use of an extended line meant that the number of men under the effective control of a single commander was necessarily lessened, and so the old gigantic regiments,

three thousand or so strong, were broken up and their command distributed among battalion commanders. From this date, for fifty or more years after, we find army strengths calculated not in terms of men but in terms of battalions and squadrons. Marlborough, as a glance at his correspondence shows, did this habitually. Divisional organization and decentralization of command was not to develop for some time, and it was not until Napoleon that we find an army broken up into corps, each under a commander-in-chief *à petit pied*. For the present it was usual to form detachments out of any odd group of battalions, and for the commander-in-chief to send any of his assistants to take command of some particular fragment of his army in the field. We have to wait until the present century to find the divisional system so crystallized that armies are reckoned neither by battalions nor by men, but by divisions.

Louvois was too concerned with the rebuilding of the army to be able to busy himself with decentralization, and perhaps it is too much to expect that he should foresee the ultimate need of a war-staff after the modern pattern. What he set himself to produce was an army of perfect battalions, and there can be no doubting the fact that he was quite successful. He found the best possible executive assistants. There was a certain Lieutenant-Colonel Martinet, who was in command of the Royal Regiment of Foot, whose ideas, Louvois found, were very similar to his own. Louvois appointed him inspector-general of infantry, and gave him extensive powers to oversee the training of the army. He made his name a byword for the strictness of discipline and precision of drill which he demanded, although it must be remembered that Martinet was a soldier with brains, despite the use to which his name

is now put. He was responsible for various innovations in the matter of field engineering, and he would have risen to distinguished command had not fate intervened. He was killed by his own guns while heading the assault upon Duisburg in 1672. Much the same fate awaited Fourries, who reorganized the cavalry under Louvois's eye. A gibe of Condé's at Seneffe in 1674 sent him forward in a hopeless charge which cost him his life, and that of most of his regiment, while achieving nothing.

Even those critics who deny Louvois any credit for inventiveness and originality are forced to admit that at least he was the first to apply tentative innovations and the new drill upon a grand scale. France set the pace in military matters ; the other armies of Europe were organized in imitation. Marlborough served in the French army in 1672, and without doubt must have taken to heart what he saw there. 'Der Alte Dessauer', who did so much for the army of Brandenburg-Prussia, was another imitator. William of Orange, as soon as he became captain-general of the army of the United Provinces, hastened to follow the same example.

But armies have their disadvantages, which become more marked when they are trained on the system of Louvois. That system, by its encouragement of *esprit de corps*, convinced the army that it was the best in the world—invincible, unfaceable, certain of victory as soon as it appeared in the field. It looked forward to war with passionate desire ; it hungered and thirsted for war. Before very long it began to clamour for war. It was a situation which is not unknown to later generations. Louvois, at the manoeuvre camps at Chalons (another innovation ; Louvois was the first to devise the autumn manoeuvres which now form the keystone of modern army training), was able to

show Louis an enormous army in marvellous condition. Louis was not unnaturally convinced of the invincibility of his arms. Louvois was not unnaturally anxious to see the army of his creation in action.

Now Louvois's strategic examination of the French frontiers had revealed to him an unpleasant state of affairs. The north-eastern frontier, towards the Spanish Netherlands, was highly unfavourable strategically both for offence and defence. Charleroi on the Sambre, Lille, Armentières, formed bases admirably situated for an army invading France, and would be unpleasant hindrances to a French army trying to invade the Netherlands. The war which had been closed by the Peace of the Pyrenees showed all too clearly the vulnerability of Paris. Louvois clamoured for a barrier of fortresses on the north-eastern frontier ; on the French side of the border there were no suitable sites. To make France secure, Louvois said, it was necessary to seize a whole strip of territory and a string of towns in the Low Countries.

Even Colbert reappeared in the argument, inclining towards war. He had found, as later statesmen than he have found, that tariff schemes and high protective duties engender international discord. The Dutch disliked the French attempt to secure a share of the world's carrying trade. The Flemish towns did not like French competition with their moribund industries. He had found that France was in great need of a good North Sea port in communication with the inland waterways which he was extending. Calais and Boulogne were too small and shallow ; Cherbourg as yet did not exist, while the new acquisition of Dunkirk was too isolated from the interior. Colbert wanted Ostend—or, much more desirable, Antwerp ; he was even casting a longing eye upon Amsterdam. If the

Netherlands were in French possession he would have an easy solution of both his naval and his fiscal problems. A cheap war with this as its object would not be much to Colbert's distaste, although Colbert saw that it must be a cheap war, and a short war, if he were to bring his manifold schemes to any extensive fruition.

Meanwhile, the international situation was becoming exceedingly involved. The United Provinces were at war with England, and Monk and de Ruyter were fighting for the sovereignty of the seas. Treaty obligations had dragged France into the struggle, and Colbert's infant navy under the Duke of Beaufort was languidly pretending to assist the Dutch. It was only a very little war, however, from the French point of view, carried on in the peculiarly peaceful manner of the period, and rather discounted by the fact that at the same time France and England were supporting Portugal in her struggle for independence of Spain.

Louis's father-in-law, the late King of Spain, had died in September 1665; Maria Theresa, Louis's wife, was his daughter by his first wife, and he was succeeded on the throne of Spain and the Indies by his son Charles II, who was the fruit of a second marriage. Louis's lawyers hunted out a curious law (or what they said was a law) of Brabant, by which property in that county descended to the children of a first marriage to the exclusion of the children of a second marriage. Consequently, argued the French diplomats, Louis was entitled to Brabant by right of his wife. For a space the argument was left to the diplomats, and even among them it died down. The world came to believe that Louis's claim had only been entered as a matter of form—as perhaps it was—and that he was too intent on the success of Colbert's schemes to appeal to arms—as perhaps he was.

The Anglo-Dutch war came to an end. At sea England had been substantially victorious, although vigorous threats on Louis's part had prevented her from raising up continental enemies against the United Provinces, while a highly successful raid by the Dutch on the Thames, Medway, and south coast, had thrown a last gleam of glory over the Dutch arms. It seemed as if peace was about to endure for a long time.

But Louis yielded to Louvois's representations. He had not had a war of his own. The last Spanish war had been Mazarin's, bequeathed him by Richelieu, and the glory had gone to Turenne and Condé. Louis was crowned at present by all sorts of laurels—financial, artistic, and social—but not military; his armies had as yet won no victory under his direction. A successful campaign was still looked upon as the highest achievement open to a crowned head. The prize in this case was so rich, and the cost apparently would be so small. Just one little war, and then he could settle down to a prosperous and glorious peace. And his soldiers were so splendid, and looked so well when Louvois displayed them manoeuvring over the plains of Chalons. Surely there could be no harm in giving them a little glory? Louis decided to invade the Netherlands, and he announced his decision to his ministers. At once Colbert set about finding the money, Louvois set about concentrating the men and the supplies, and Lionne, the foreign minister, who had been trained by Mazarin, set about the task of keeping the ring clear.

For this last purpose the negotiations with the Bishop of Münster, who had declared himself Charles II's ally against the United Provinces, formed a convenient cloak and excuse. Colbert and Lionne set about obtaining the countenance of the Rhenish provinces for the attempt, and they were entirely

successful. Neuburg, Luneburg, Cologne, even Brandenburg, agreed to remain neutral. Sweden promised alliance if the Empire interfered. Louis fully realized that the United Provinces would dislike his conquest of the Spanish Netherlands, but he also knew that it would be long before they could oppose him in force, and he had the utmost contempt for their military power. As regards Spain itself (which would be the aggrieved party in that the Netherlands were Spanish) Louis had small fears. Spanish armies had never recovered from the blows dealt them at Rocroi and Lens ; the fortresses of the Low Countries were in the last stages of neglect and disrepair ; Charles, the king, was a feeble and irresolute individual ; Louis could foresee no active resistance.

The French armies gradually began to drift towards the north-eastern frontier. Turenne, recently appointed marshal-general of France, was the senior officer in command, and Louis proposed to accompany him. Turenne would dispose of forty thousand men in the central force, Crequi had the right wing of half that number, and d'Aumont the left wing on the coast. The military preparations were made with all the secrecy possible, and no declaration of war was issued. According to Louis, he was merely invading the Spanish Netherlands with eighty thousand men in order to secure this inheritance which Spain ought to hand over to him.

At midsummer the word was given, and the immense wave of men rolled forward over the frontier. Spain may have been surprised, or her slothfulness may have prevented preparation, but, however it was, there was little resistance. Town after town surrendered. Charleroi, Tournai, and Armentières fell into Louis's hands. Only Lille made any show of resistance, and against

that town Louis directed the whole weight of Turenne's army. The march of the troops, with their tents and baggage and regular supplies, had been portentously slow, and most probably Louis's commissariat department was not fully up to its work in this its first experience of war. Louis was looking for an opportunity of distinguishing himself, and the capture of Lille may have appeared to him as the most promising. Whatever the reasons may have been, the advance was stayed, and the French army was massed in due form round the town.

Lille held out for five weeks against Turenne's slow but economical attack, and during those five weeks Louis, so we are informed by French writers, exposed himself freely, went everywhere, saw everything, and acted as the earnest student of war he had said he was. By the time Lille surrendered autumn was at hand, the roads were beginning to disintegrate, and, according to Louis's ideas, not much time was left for a continuance of the advance. Marsin (a Frenchman, and one of Condé's assistants while he was in Spanish service) contrived to scrape together a few troops and made a bold advance on the town, but he was badly beaten by superior numbers in a scrambling fight, and Louis decided that there was little more glory to be won at present and retired to Paris.

His presence there was urgently necessary, too, for it had become apparent that the invasion of the Netherlands was likely to meet with more opposition than had been expected. Louis and Lionne had overlooked an amendment to the Dutch constitution which left the power of concluding alliances in the hands of a small committee; previously all such treaties had to be discussed and agreed to by the Estates of each province separately, and Louis, with reason, had

counted on delaying any ratification indefinitely were such the case. As it was, however, the United Provinces, alarmed at the French advance, were in a position to take powerful action.

The English people thoroughly disliked the idea of any increase in the power of the French on the North Sea. After their experience with the Armada they would never willingly see Antwerp or even Ostend in the hands of a great power. Events were to prove that they would fight for a hundred and fifty years to prevent it—and 1914 showed much the same. Moreover, they strongly disliked Louis's attempts to create a French navy, and French tariffs and French competition in the matter of the carrying trade had irritated them exceedingly. Even the religious aspect of the matter tended to incite them against Louis. So that although Charles of England had no wish to fight France, he speedily found a very definite current of popular opinion setting in towards hostilities, and Charles was not the man to oppose it. Sir William Temple rather forced his hand, and by the time the winter of 1667 had set in Louis found England and the United Provinces arrayed against his proposed annexation of the Netherlands. Later, in May 1668, Sweden broke away from France and joined the alliance, seduced by the offer of England and Holland to guarantee her the payment by Spain of various moneys owed her since the Thirty Years' War.

All this was extremely serious. Colbert represented urgently to Louis that there must not be a long war. The defection of Sweden showed that the German princes might also change sides. The Empire might begin to move. Before long Louis might find all Europe—every civilized power in the world—arrayed against him.

But Louis was not going to give up all his conquests. He realized acutely that the alliance would be willing to grant something to him if only his progress was stopped. He wanted to be in a position to bargain, to have something to give in exchange for the definite recognition of his annexation of the towns he had seized in the Netherlands. While Turenne remained in command in Belgium, Louvois and Louis held a hurried conference with Condé, who until now had been left in retirement. The reserve army of France began to gather in Burgundy, whither Condé betook himself, apparently to preside over a meeting of the provincial parliament. Agents of Louis went busily to and fro through Franche Comté, corrupting magistrates and mayors. At the beginning of February, Condé suddenly rushed into that isolated Spanish enclave at the head of twenty thousand men. Once again there was no serious resistance. Only Dole made any attempt to stand a siege, and hither came Louis from Paris, to gain a little more glory by an easy conquest. But Dole surrendered as soon as the approaches were open, and Louis was able to return to Paris after only three weeks' absence with all the laurels of the conquest of Franche Comté.

Already, however, peace commissioners were meeting at Aix-la-Chapelle, and, in Paris, Louis was treating with the Dutch ambassador. Louis could offer to yield either Franche Comté or his conquests in the Netherlands, and yet plume himself upon his moderation. Moderation, indeed, was desirable, for the Dutch were displaying unwonted energy in raising and training troops, the combined fleets were at sea, and at this time Sweden definitely announced her change of sides. Louis made a few ostentatious movements of troops in the Netherlands, and hinted that if peace

were delayed he would not be content with the terms proposed. At that the allies yielded. Spain thankfully accepted Louis's contemptuous restoration of Franche Comté, with the fortresses dismantled, and Louis was left in possession of Charleroi, Lille, Tournai, a dozen other large towns, and a hundred villages.

Truly Louis should have considered himself satisfied. France now possessed a whole chain of fortresses along her vital frontier ; she had acquired a valuable slice of territory at small cost ; her armies had emerged from the trial of active service with enormous prestige ; and Franche Comté was hers for the taking. Even Colbert, who was disappointed that Ostend was not yet French, should have been content that France had secured a large increase to her manufacturing and trading population at such a small outlay of money. From an account-book point of view, could France have acquired such an increase in manufactures and in population for a similar outlay in bounties ? The party of Louvois argued that she could not. And look at the glory ! There was arising in France a generation which could regard battles from a test match point of view, and which could consider the Low Countries in the same light as we trivial moderns regard Wimbledon or Forest Hills. It is an outlook which only Death, bloody and unmistakable, can alter.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ADORABLE MORTEMART

FRANÇOISE-ATHENAIS DE MORTEMART was a daughter of one of the oldest and most famous houses of the south. Her ancestors included Dukes of Aquitaine, and she could trace her ancestry back to the days of the Carolings, centuries before ever Hugh Capet, Louis's parvenu ancestor, came to rule over Paris. The Mortemarts had long been famous for brilliance of wit, for magnificent good looks, for abounding health and spirits, for everything, in fact, which would have brought them distinction at the Court of France. Françoise-Athenais was the fairest bloom on this magnificent family tree.

When quite a girl she had been married to the Marquis de Montespan, who was almost worthy, as far as wealth and lineage went, of this union. She had come to court, as was inevitable. She had received a place among the Queen's ladies, as was only natural. She had become the King's mistress, as she wanted.

At first sight it seems hard to believe the stories told of her deliberate planning and manœuvring for this position. It sounds too like fiction that a woman should both aim at the distinction and gain it. Coincidence seems to be overworked, and one cannot help harbouring the suspicion that the stories were made up after her success. And yet there is another way of considering the matter in which coincidence is not sufficiently utilized; for dozens and dozens of women schemed and plotted and manœuvred to become Louis's mistress, but they did not all succeed: surprisingly few of them, in fact.

The more one considers the matter, the more one comes to believe what is told of Mme de Montespan's early life at Court. She set out deliberately to gain the King's attention. Her position in attendance on the Queen gave her a good strategic base, and she neglected no possible means to her end. She spent her husband's money like water on dresses and jewels ; she never let slip an opportunity of displaying her pretty wit ; she dangled herself under Louis's nose in irresistible fashion. Nor was that all : it was not like the Marquise to neglect less obvious means. There were love philtres, dropped into Louis's wine by bribed footmen. There were spells and charms and amulets. There was a secret visit to a debauched friar in a by-street, at which the Black Mass was said over her naked body, and at which she solemnly devoted herself to the devil in exchange for his assistance in attaining royal favour.

Louis's attention began to linger on her. He was so thoroughly bored with La Vallière's eternal pleadings and caresses and protestations. She was a spiritless, hopeless creature. But this one, this Marquise de Montespan, all fire and ice, all sparkle and vivacity, with such a distinguished ancestry, and seemingly not a bit ready to fall to him ! No hot-blooded young man of under thirty could resist the lure. He sent a tentative note or two, and a few emissary pieces of jewellery. It seemed almost too good to be true that she should deign to listen to him. Mme de Montespan was promptly nominated to accompany the Queen and La Vallière on their famous tour through Louis's new conquests in 1667.

It was not very comfortable. More than once the Queen and her ladies had to sleep in barns or in their carriages ; there was even one notable occasion when

King and Queen and the household had to sleep all together on one mattress in a stable. But that was all to the good, for it enabled Louis to show this fine lady what hardships he was enduring. For Françoise's favour he exposed himself so recklessly at the siege of Lille, just as, nearly ten years ago, he had stood fire at Bergues for the sake of the bright eyes of Marie de Mancini.

Françoise-Athenais was not unkind. She would not keep him languishing too long. As soon as Louis was sufficiently convinced that he had had to struggle hard to merit her favour she yielded gracefully. Even then it was not too easy for Louis to gather the fruits of his valour and his beauty. There was still the etiquette of the court to evade—to say nothing of having to deceive the Queen, La Vallière, and the Marquis de Montespan. We hear that Louis donned the uniform of an officer of his Swiss Guard in order to gain her room; that on occasions of overcrowding the lady who was allotted a share of it had to be got out of the way on some excuse or other; that once again Louis condescended to all sorts of ignominious subterfuges in order to gain access to the lady without its becoming common knowledge.

Of course it was a vain hope. By 1668 the whole court knew of the affair. La Vallière could grieve over it, the Queen could take it philosophically, and M. de Montespan could go into transports of rage; for this strange man was not at all ready to accept the *rôle* of *mari complaisant*. He stormed and blustered, he laid violent hands on his wife, he even went so far as to utter threats against the King. Clearly this was much too insolent for Louis to bear lightly. A *lettre de cachet* was signed, and Montespan was haled off to cool his temper in a dungeon in the Bastille. It was

some time before he could even obtain the boon of banishment from court and relegation to his estates. And the court which laughed at his troubles thought it was a very suitable method of dealing with husbands who raised difficulties. Most husbands there would be glad to find themselves similarly situated.

Yet the marquis was a horrible nuisance. He obstructed the gift of the honours which were his wife's due, for Françoise could hardly be made a duchess while he remained a mere marquis, and this was a difficulty which was never evaded. Louis did his best for her, nevertheless, despite this hitch. He gave her the tabouret, the little stool which meant so much, and which gave her the right to a chair on certain occasions of ceremony as well as precedence over other marchionesses; and shortly afterwards he made her *surintendante* of the Queen's household, thereby giving her the best place about the court. He did not seem to mind Marie Louise's feelings on the point.

La Montespan soon showed the stuff of which she was made. There had been a time when she had been overflowing with friendship for La Vallière, when she had insinuated herself into the Queen's good graces by her ostentatious devotion at church, and when she had assiduously cultivated the friendship of every one likely to be of use to her. Now that was all changed. More than once La Vallière was reduced to tears by the cruel slights which her successful rival put upon her. The throng which came to La Montespan's apartment were received with royal state. They found that no one could sit in her presence, for hers was the only chair in the room. She glittered continually in a profusion of jewellery; Louis was in his way a collector of jewels, and lavished the best of his collection, his 'museum pieces,' so to speak, upon her. She never

condescended to pay visits, yet even the Queen came to call upon her *surintendante*. She repaid Lauzun, the most successful debauchee of a debauched court, for certain rudenesses to her, by inducing Louis to send him to a dungeon for a dozen years, making as excuse his secret marriage to Mlle de Montpensier, to which Louis had already consented.

She indulged right and left in a wantonness of power which found victims everywhere. All the court writhed at some time or other under the lash of her witticisms and her arrogance of demeanour. She ruled the tri-weekly court receptions in a manner the Queen had never aspired to. Because of her whims the alterations to the palace of St. Germain were realtered and altered again, until they were not alterations but a complete rebuilding. As Versailles grew she clamoured for a palace of her own, and as a result received the Trianon—not the Trianon as we know it, but a smaller, daintier little palace, built, at enormous expense, of porcelain, to make a fitting casket for this expensive little jewel. Her demands for money were incessant, and although Colbert swept the treasury bare at Louis's command she was never satisfied. The money ran through her little white hands like water; it was expended on a magnificent household, on carriages, on dress, and, above all, on gambling. There was a craze for high play—and not a passing craze, either. Those tri-weekly court receptions, already mentioned, were little else than assemblies for the purpose of gambling. Enormous sums were lost and won there, and Louis was by no means the least loser—perhaps because of his kingly habit of restoring his opponent's losses. La Montespan did not do the like; what she won she spent, and what she lost she demanded—and received—from the royal treasury.

The word 'demanded' is used deliberately. She had seen how La Vallière had lost her hold on the King by her yieldingness and modesty of demeanour, and she was not going to err in the same way herself. If anything, she erred in the opposite direction. She hectored and bullied the King as though he were dependent on her instead of matters being the other way about. She stormed and blustered at him. Louis, who was the soul of courtesy, was taken at a disadvantage. His code of etiquette did not permit him to answer a lady back. He bowed before the storm, and gave in to her wishes as the price of peace.

For years Louis was not master in his own house. He could not even adopt the undignified but perhaps more comfortable course of running away. Not only had the lady, in her capacity of *surintendante*, the right of entry to the royal presence, but the court officials would be chary of barring her out even were it by the King's orders, for every one knew that were she to regain favour her vengeance would be swift and terrible. Moreover, it would only be in the last resort that Louis would issue such orders; his sense of dignity would be outraged at having to admit to the world that his mistress was too much for him—and even the King would find it at the limit of his powers to interfere with the right of entry, which was the most cherished of the privileges he could grant.

So the marquise ruled for long by the sheer force of terror. There is a story, oft repeated, of how on one occasion she searched the pockets of the protesting King for the list of new marshals of France Louvois had given him for his approval; of how she found that her brother's name was not included, and of how she scolded the King into granting the coveted distinction. In truth, she gave her family as little reason as might



THE MARQUISE DE MONTESPAN

be to regret her fall from virtue. Her brother, the Duc de Vivonne, became, as already explained, marshal of France. Her father, the Duc de Mortemart, became governor of Paris. Her sister became abbess of Fontevrault, the richest foundation of its kind in France. From Louis she obtained pensions, places, and titles for little cousins and poor dependents;

But she was too clever to neglect any possible means of conserving her power. Louvois had courted her in the days when Louis was more inclined to listen to Colbert instead of him, and now that Louvois had the royal ear and was enhaloed with the prestige of two successful campaigns she saw to it that Louvois had no cause for complaint against her. She won him increases of salary ; she arranged that his mistress should be received at court with proper respect ; she gave her countenance to his schemes for little wars and increases of the army. Colbert the cold-hearted would not truckle to her, and spent much time opposing her demands for money, so that she turned against him, did her best to force the King to refuse his requests, and became an ardent advocate of warlike expansion.

She dominated the King, she won herself allies, she warred against her enemies, and still she took precautions. She induced the King to decree that in future all the Queen's women should be married—marriage had not prevented her from becoming the King's mistress, but it might be a hindrance to others bent on the same consummation. The decree had a curious result in the next reign, for Louis XV found that to have his women conveniently to hand husbands had to be found for them. She was careful to do her utmost to conserve her own charms. We find early descriptions and portraits of her giving her hair as

dark and her complexion to correspond, but as the years go by she becomes fairer and fairer, for Louis was credited with having more taste for blondes than for brunettes. She bathed herself in scent—a great many contemporary writers comment on her passion for scent—because Louis liked it, although it is strongly hinted that she employed it also to mask, when she was enjoying the royal favours, the stench of Louis's decaying teeth. Charlatans and chemists sought to compound for her the ideal complexion salve.

And now, with this mention of chemistry, we begin upon the most significant and most secret passage of the reign. Chemists and charlatans alike were finding much employment. Before she had succeeded in gaining her present position the marquise had made use of spells, love philtres, and magic generally. Now she began to employ them again to maintain her in her position. Various magicians compounded love potions for her, which were administered to the King by the convenient method of bribing the priest to drop them into the sacramental wine at Mass. As subsequent disclosures proved, the King was dosed for years with horrible concoctions, including, of course, cantharides, but also including toads' bones and similar ingredients. The Black Mass was celebrated again and again over Mme de Montespan's recumbent form, and now, consequent upon her increase of funds, and power, with more expensive and dangerous accessories. Little children's throats were cut so that their blood might with due ceremony be caught in the unholy chalice. Again and again the devil was implored to grant that Louis and the Dauphin might still love her, that the Queen might die, and that she would be raised to the throne.

From this kind of experiment it was but a step to

another kind. With such tools ready to hand it was hardly to be expected that the marquise would brook any rivals. Henrietta, Duchess of Orleans, Louis's sister-in-law, of whom he had been so enamoured ten years ago, had, in 1670, just negotiated with her brother Charles of England the secret treaty of Dover, and had left with him as unofficial ambassadress one of her waiting women, who was to become Duchess of Portsmouth and ancestress of the ducal family of Richmond and Gordon. It was a great achievement on Henrietta's part, and although every effort was made to keep the treaty secret, the news leaked out, as it always will under such circumstances. Henrietta was seen by all to be likely to rise further than ever in the favour of Louis. And Henrietta died very suddenly indeed, in frightful pain, complaining she had been poisoned.

There was no proof in the matter either way. The science of chemistry was still so far in its infancy that the detection of even simple mineral poisons was a very hit-or-miss business, while the vegetable alkaloids, of which a sufficiency was already known to the alchemists, could not be found at all. Medical knowledge could not deduce from the symptoms in any case with certainty whether death was due to natural causes or to poison, and on examination of the body simple post-mortem changes were liable to be mistaken for those due to poison and *vice versa*—blood-clots being even noticed as deadly black growths due to some noxious drug. In Henrietta's case, moreover, there were too many motives detectable; half a dozen people, including her husband, her rivals, and various lovers, were thought to be not unanxious for her death. Inquiry died down, although the suspicious circumstances were never forgotten.

Poisoning was undoubtedly in frequent use in France at that time. In 1676 there was a horrible thunderclap of scandal when the Marquise de Brinvilliers was put on her trial for the murder by poison of half a dozen people. She had learned her method from her lover, who in turn had learned it from an Italian, Exile, during a sojourn in the Bastille. The marquise was tortured and executed, but the affair started further rumours and whisperings throughout French society.

Yet during these years Mme de Montespan continued to maintain her ascendancy over the King. She bore him nine children, all of them in nearly as much secrecy as La Vallière had borne hers, of whom five survived infancy, and on their account she had a stronger hold than before on his affections. In 1673 she persuaded Louis to compel the Paris Parliament to register an edict legitimatizing them, although their mother's name was not mentioned. A royal decree announced the dissolution of her marriage with the marquis, on the ground of various misdeeds of his during his compulsory sojourn on his estates. La Montespan could now cherish the high hope that were she to survive the Queen Louis would make her his wife.

Louis, indeed, seemed to be quite infatuated. The palaces he was building with the millions Colbert handed over so reluctantly were built largely to gratify her whims ; Louis, schoolboy like, seemed to be trying to dazzle this very fine lady with the magnificent pedigree by his display of power and wealth. Louvois and the army blessed her name, for she was their stoutest ally. Corneille, Racine, La Fontaine were all indebted to her for their places and pensions, and poured out panegyrics upon her almost as fulsome as those they lavished on the King himself.

Nevertheless, her reign did not go unchallenged. Various people thought they would prosper by her fall ; various people thought the connexion bad for France ; various people were even sincerely sorry to see the King living in double adultery. From time to time there were various little intrigues aimed at breaking the union. A certain Mme de Maintenon, who was governess of the King's illegitimate children and a lady of sincere piety and growing influence at court, suggested one fairly obvious method. Louis was refused the Sacrament, on account of his sinful life, by the parish priest of Versailles, largely, it is to be supposed, at the instigation of Bossuet inspired by Mme de Maintenon.

Somewhere within him Louis had a strong vein of piety and of reverence for sacred things, which was tending to come nearer and nearer to the surface. The refusal of the Sacrament moved him very strongly, and when Bossuet persisted in his refusal and preached a determined sermon at him on the subject of his vices he yielded. Mme de Montespan left Versailles, La Vallière definitely entered her convent, Louis was readmitted to the fold, and Bossuet appeared to have triumphed. That was at Easter, and Louis left immediately afterwards to take his place with his army, which was entering on its summer campaign of 1675. For some weeks he remained there. He led an active and busy life at the head of his troops ; he worked hard ; he marched and he countermarched ; he superintended sieges ; he plunged himself into the seas of diplomacy which continually washed round him. At last he gave himself some well-earned leave. All the world knows about soldiers home on leave from Flanders. He came back to Versailles, and Mme de Montespan had made her way there just before him.

Bossuet threw himself in his path, uttering vain protests. Louis thrust him aside, and next day the court knew that Mme de Montespan was still one whose influence needed taking into account.

In 1679 a more serious incident occurred. A young and beautiful girl caught Louis's fancy; this was Mlle de Fontanges. A new idyll blossomed rapidly. La Montespan fought hard for her position. She raged and raved, but by now, after a dozen years, Louis had learned to bow before the storm and allow it to pass unheeded overhead. He spent much time with the new love. People began to think that the old situation would develop with different *dramatis personae*. Montespan would find her title of *maîtresse en titre* far emptier than the Queen found her title of wife, just as La Vallière had done before her, while Mlle de Fontanges would move up into the desirable position of unofficial mistress vacated by Montespan. Soon it became known that Mlle de Fontanges was pregnant, and her triumph was looked upon as a foregone conclusion; already she had been given the tabouret, that mystic symbol which was the outward and visible sign of something more than precedence.

And then Mlle de Fontanges died, very suddenly, if death in child-birth can be looked upon as sudden. At once rumours and whisperings began to spread apace. Murder? No one could tell in those days from empirical evidence alone whether murder had been committed. Every one concerned was seized by a spasm of horrible doubt. Louis began to fear he knew not what. In a panic he forbade any autopsy to be held on the unfortunate woman's body.

The police had begun to ask questions. Certain terrible things had been revealed to priests under seal of the confessional, and certain other things had been

revealed to them without that safeguard. Whether or not the confessional was violated, it is certain enough that it was from priests that the police first obtained a hint of what was happening. Their notice once attracted, the police began to pay closer attention to the actions of various people whom they knew to be guilty of minor malpractices, such as fortune telling. Evidence accumulated rapidly, and when it was laid before Louis he was sufficiently impressed to form a new Chamber of Justice, the *Chambre Ardente*, to deal with poisonings, magic, witchcraft, and sacrilege, along with the allied crimes of coining and unlicensed medical practice.

Magic and witchcraft were still considered atrocious crimes in those days. The Bible text, 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live', was acted upon with blind ferocity; at that very time witches were being drowned in various parts of England, and a dozen years later persecution was to flame out across the Atlantic at the witch-hunts of Salem and elsewhere. In Paris justification for the rigorous treatment of magicians was to be found in their atrocious murders of children at Black Masses and similar horrible rites.

To the *Chambre Ardente* was presented a mass of evidence, much of it fantastic, some of it suspect as having been obtained by torture, but the residue vastly convincing. A certain Catherine Monvoisin, known to all and sundry as 'La Voisin', was found to have acted as purveyor of poisons to a large number of people in Paris. She and her various accomplices and competitors in the business carried on a large trade in a drug significantly known as '*poudre de succession*', which, as far as can be ascertained, was white arsenic—a fact which goes far to prove how little the post-mortem examinations of those days revealed. The

symptoms exhibited by Henrietta d'Orleans seem to correspond closely with those of arsenic poisoning. La Voisin herself was convicted of a conspiracy to kill the King himself by giving him a poisoned petition whose touch would be fatal. That implies the use of a poison more effective than any known to us weak moderns, and stronger even than those employed by the Borgias and the Visconti, who had at least to use poisoned gloves, or rings which would inflict a wound. No modern toxicologist is prepared to admit the possibility of even the existence of poisons as effective as the Borgias', still less so that of a poison which would kill on a casual contact such as would occur during the small time Louis would handle a petition. We are therefore forced to choose between modern knowledge and past hearsay, although we must admit that La Voisin may have *thought* her poisons to be as deadly as the police apparently did. However it was, La Voisin was quite early in the proceedings condemned and executed.

But the police proceeded to prove that she was no more than a tool handled by people of infinitely superior station. The Duchess of Bouillon and the Countess of Soissons, two of Mazarin's nieces, the latter Olympe Mancini, who had once been Louis's mistress, were shown to have had relations with her, to have supplied her with money, and to have taken part in various magical experiments with her confederates. The duchess stood up manfully to the court, but the countess was unfortunate in that she was suspected of complicity in the death of the late Queen of Spain (once again confusion was caused by the total inability of doctors to distinguish death by poison from death by natural causes), and she found it advisable to take refuge in exile until her death some years later as a

shunned and hated outcast. Further bearers of great names appeared before the court. Luxemburg, the most promising of the younger school of generals, was summoned again and again, and spent some considerable period in prison in consequence of proof that he had shared in La Voisin's attempts to read the future. Suspicion pointed in all directions; even princes of the blood—even the Duke of Orleans, the King's brother—were not free of the taint. Paris was plunged into the wildest uncertainty and panic.

And all this time no one dared openly to point the finger of suspicion at the person who was most suspected. The court itself acted cautiously. In the examination of La Voisin and others one name repeatedly occurred—the name of Mme de Montespan's confidential maid. What was *she* doing in that business? Most people well acquainted with current gossip considered the answer obvious. Who would profit most by the death of certain people whose lives had been aimed at—La Vallière, Mlle de Fontanges, the Queen, if not the King himself? It was not long before suspicion grew to certainty that Montespan had plotted poisonings, as well as sharing in Black Masses and similar horrible affairs.

It was at this point that the royal authority exerted its sway. Louis was frightened by the extent of the disclosures. He could not bear the thought of further royal scandals. Already, for six months in 1680 to 1681, he had suspended the sittings of the court. In July 1682 he abolished the *Chambre Ardente* altogether. It had sat off and on for a period of three years, during which time thirty-six persons had been sentenced to the gallows, the stake, or the wheel, and a dozen or two more had been sent to the galleys or into exile.

But that was not all. Dark stories were told of others, innocent people or ones who had not stood a trial, who were sent into prisons by the royal *lettre de cachet* for no reason given. They were the people who knew things, people whose mouths were better stopped. The prison governors were given orders to have them flogged if they attempted to communicate with the outside world ; they languished in their dungeons until death set them free. Louis was determined to end the scandal once for all, and he found his unquestioned autocracy distinctly useful.

Against the Marquise de Montespan no proceedings were taken. Louis was appalled at the prospect of having his chief mistress, the mother of the children for whom he was planning a splendid future, sent to the stake which was the portion of poisoners. It could not be done ; it would be too severe a set-back to the prestige of the Crown, and he feared—he knew—that Montespan in her fall would take care to bring down others with her ; she would incriminate half the royal family. He would take no action at all against her ; that would be a good way of setting the tongue of scandal at rest, while the threat of changing his mind would be an equally good way of silencing her should she give way to the rages which had once terrorized him.

Of course the affair was at an end. Even if Louis did not think she had plotted against his life (and she had no conceivable motive save reckless revenge for doing so), he was humiliated by the thought that she had dosed him with aphrodisiacs—and there was the dead Fontanges to remember. He could never again have dealings with a poisoner, a magician, a murderess of children, although he would not at present dismiss her from the court. So for ten years the marquise lingered on at court, a pale shade of her former self

like Aeneas's wife during the flight from Troy. She tried to make the best of it ; she tried to make her wit and charm take the place of her lost influence with the King ; she tried to build up at court a little party of her own, and actually succeeded to a certain extent. But circumstances were too strong for her ; too many people remembered the poisoning scandals, and too many people remembered the slights and insults she had put upon them. In 1691 she retired into the convent of St. Joseph—a retirement sweetened by a pension of half a million francs which Louis, with his usual generosity, saw fit to confer upon her.

CHAPTER IX

ETIQUETTE

HERE and there through this book there have been various allusions to the etiquette which surrounded the King in all the details of his daily life, and perhaps from these allusions some idea of the importance of the court etiquette may have been conveyed. There can be no true grasp of the King's character without an understanding of his environment.

To the stranger, the approach to the palace of Versailles was a decided indication of what was to follow. Arriving by the Avenue de Paris he found the well-known three gates set in the blue and gold railings. The centre one (the one now open to all and sundry) was in those days strictly reserved for the King and princes of blood; the nobility were permitted to pass through the other two. Beyond the gates was a second blue and gold rail, now removed, in which was another gate through which only very eminent people indeed could drive; the majority had to quit their carriages here. And having had these little details of etiquette thrust upon him, the stranger would now receive a hint of the organization of the state service, for he could, if he liked, engage a sedan chair at this point to carry him to the entrance—from a company which had purchased from the King the right to ply for hire here in the courtyard of the King's own palace.

These minute variations of privilege were the foundation of the whole system of etiquette, whose mainspring was the recognition of the semi-divinity of the King. The grand epitome of the whole was the King's lever.

Certain people were allowed to enter the King's bedroom in the morning while he was still in bed, but these, of course, were only the most eminent indeed — the Dauphin, his sons, Orleans, Maine, and Toulouse (the King's sons by Mme de Montespan), and the Princes of the house of Condé. Only these had the privilege of the Family Entry, but hard on their heels came the Grand Entry, consisting of noblemen of the household, such as the Chamberlain and the Master of the Wardrobe, and distinguished generals and courtiers whose achievements had proved them worthy of the honour. These eminent gentlemen now had the privilege of seeing the King dip his hand in holy water, and climb out of bed and don his dressing-gown, and then they had to crowd back into the King's cabinet while he said his private prayers.

The King could now emerge from the railing round his bed and sit down in his arm-chair, and the First Entry was now admitted—gentlemen rather lower in the scale than their forerunners. They could see the King shave and put on his wig. Then came the time of the Entry—the remaining cardinals, marshals, and courtiers who had been waiting in the ante-chamber. (One is irresistibly reminded by this Family Entry, Grand Entry, First Entry, and Entry of the grocer's graduated labels — Eggs — Guaranteed ; Eggs — New Laid ; Eggs — Fresh ; Eggs—but it seems a little out of place to mention it. To Louis it would have been plain blasphemy). The large crowd now present could observe the valets of the wardrobe helping the King into the royal breeches and stockings, and could see the First Valet of the Wardrobe pass the royal shirt to the Grand Master of the Wardrobe, and the Grand Master of the Wardrobe present it to the Dauphin or his deputy prince of blood, and the Dauphin hand it

on to the King to pull on over the royal head. At this crucial moment, while the night-shirt was off and the day-shirt not yet on, one little concession was made to the King's privacy. Two valets held up the King's dressing-gown as a screen in front of him during the change. Half dressed, the King broke his fast on bread and wine and water, served in gold and porcelain on a golden salver, with all the formalities of the Trial (the historic precaution against poison, calling for activity and bows and presentations by the Cupbearer, the Chief of the Goblet, and the Chief of the Wine Cellar, with lacqueys) superimposed.

To complete the King's costume, the valets brought his coat and vest, the blue ribbon of the Saint Esprit, cravat, hat, sword and cane. By an exquisitely planned time-table all these items were put in place one after the other. The King actually condescended to tie his own cravat, but the Grand Master of the Wardrobe oversaw the fastening of the sword, and helped on the coat and vest and arranged the *cordons bleus*. Handkerchiefs were presented to the King on a tray by the Master (most certainly not the Grand Master) of the Wardrobe, but if the King were ill and staying in bed (in which case the lever, although still carried out, was considerably altered), the Grand Master had that privilege to compensate for his inability to handle coat and vest and ribbon. Then the King knelt once more at his prayers, and the lever, that masterpiece of etiquette, was complete.

To realize the full effect of such a function, it must always be remembered that it was not an occasional ceremony ; it did not merely occur on occasions of great state, but took place solemnly every morning—morning after morning, year after year—for half a century and more of Louis's life. For fifty years

people were intriguing and hoping for the privilege of seeing the King shave as well as pull on his breeches, and honestly believing it to be a high honour to be so privileged. St. Simon, a most eminent noble, was delighted when under Orleans's regency he was accorded the Grand Entry instead of the mere First Entry, which was all Louis XIV had granted him. Hundreds and hundreds of nobles cherished the same ambition—the crowd of gentlemen looking on at Louis's uprising frequently amounted to three hundred people.

And Louis saw to it that there was no chance of the crowd diminishing. He brought to the aid of the eye of a hawk a far-reaching memory for names and faces. A gentleman who did not make free use of the privilege of entry which Louis had so generously granted him was a lost soul. For him there would be no royal favour, no army promotion, no fat sinecure, no rich livings for his younger sons. It was by this insistence of continual personal attendance that Louis differed from his predecessors. Montaigne, a century before, had contrived to be a gentleman of the bedchamber and yet to pass most of his time on his estate. It would have been as impossible under Louis XIV as it would have been for him to write his essays during the same reign.

From the lever the King went to Mass, and from the Mass to the Council, and after the Council, somewhere about one o'clock, the King dined. Again etiquette triumphed. The royal food was brought from the kitchens with an elaborate ceremony and precaution—an armed guard, ushers, the Contrôller-General of the Pantry, half a dozen other distinguished officials, and various servants escorting it with all due solemnity from the Grand Commun to the antechamber,

halting on the way for the correct officers to eat their correct portions as a test for poison. The King ate alone at a small table, with the usual three hundred courtiers looking on. Princes of blood, if they were lucky, were sometimes offered a seat (which, in accordance with etiquette, they only took when offered it a second time), and sometimes Orleans or the Dauphin would even be asked to dine at the same table! The King's Almoner had the duty of producing clean napkins when required, and Orleans had the privilege of handing them to the King. The Grand Chamberlain superintended the operations of the Carver and the Plate Changer and their assistants. The Chief of the Goblet and a dozen other officers were at hand to relieve the King's thirst when necessary.

After dinner the King changed his clothes, this time only in the presence of a few very privileged persons, and then he descended to hunt, or drive, or to walk in his gardens. Paris lay in the midst of a wide ring of royal game preserves—Versailles itself, Marly, St. Germain, Fontainebleau, the Bois de Boulogne, Compiègne, and so on—and the King could hunt seven days a week when he wanted to without difficulty.

Stag-hunting was one of the King's most popular diversions, and the forests were kept carefully clear of undergrowth to allow of hard riding between the trees, while a special department of the King's hunt saw to it that a sufficiency of animals was caught in the provinces and sent up to the capital to provide royal sport. But besides stags the King could hunt fallow deer, wolves, wild boars, hares, even foxes (which were killed with swords or spears), and for each of these hunts there were special officers and servants and hounds (the royal kennels held more than a thousand hounds), and special uniforms—and, of course, special precedence

and salaries. Even falconry, that out-of-fashion recreation of Louis XIII, was possible ; the Grand Falconer had a hundred or more men under his orders in case the King's whim should incline towards falconry. As at the lever, the various grades of courtiers had various privileges at the hunt. Some could always accompany the King ; others could only take part in special places or by special invitation. It was almost as great an honour to be granted the *juste-au-corps*, the hunt uniform, as it was to be allowed to see the King's valet put on the King's garters. Not infrequently the hunt took the form of a vast sweep through a section of forest, centring upon a netted enclosure, wherein, at the end of the beat, the huntsmen could display their prowess by entering with spears and killing stags and boars and foxes to their hearts' content. The hunt always ended with a torchlight ceremonial, whereby, at a sign from the King, the hounds were regaled with the bowels of the slain stags amid the appropriate music from the hunting horns.

After the hunt came the King's free time ; he could do what he liked then, and the courtiers were for an hour or two denied the privilege of the King's presence. It was this hour or two which the King spent with La Vallière, or La Montespan, or La Fontanges, or La Maintenon, or, haply, even with the Queen. We find that the bold and daring Lauzun, at the height of the scheming which eventually landed him in a dungeon at Pinerolo, hid himself under Montespan's bed in the afternoon to hear whether she would make a certain request for him to the King, as he had asked her to do. That was the most likely place and time for him to hear conversation between the two—Louis was a slave to the etiquette of court

just as much as were his servants, and he could not choose any time of the day (or night) for these observances.

Then, soon after ten, the King supped, with three hundred courtiers round him, and a few princes and princesses of the blood seated on stools at table with him. Again the armed escort came marching from the kitchens with the royal food ; again the dignified ceremonial of the *Essai* saw to it that the King would not be poisoned ; Chamberlain saw to the service ; Almoner handed the napkins ; Gentlemen-in-Waiting stood by the King's chair ; lords and ladies stood, rank on rank, regarding their King eat his supper ; princes and princesses waited for a royal remark before making one of their own ; everything continued happily.

Etiquette held on remorselessly. After dinner the whole three hundred came and stood solemnly round the King as he sat at his bedside, for a few minutes ; then he passed into his cabinet and sat for a few more minutes in an arm-chair there, with princesses of the blood round him on stools and princes of the blood round him on their feet, listening attentively to any remarks he might make. When this conversation died down the law decreed that the King should return to his bedchamber for the coucher—that last resplendent ceremony of the day.

The coucher retraced step by step the lever of the morning. The people with the entrée, with the First Entrée, with the Grand Entrée, and the Family Entrée retired one section after the other, their retirement being timed to coincide with the removal of various items of the King's costume. The King's royal dressing-gown was held up to conceal the royal nakedness during the interval between the removal of

the shirt and the donning of the night-shirt (the latter, of course, being handed to the King by a prince of the blood), and the King washed his face and hands in a basin tendered him by other princes. One little new piece of ceremonial makes itself apparent at this stage; the King could name any one of the individuals in the room to hold a certain candlestick which appeared in the ceremonial (a quite superfluous candlestick, for the room was well lighted), and this naming gave the lucky man the right to remain during the whole performance, regardless of what right of entry he held. The honour of the candlestick was most bitterly intrigued for and sought after; memoirists record the receipt of the honour with most unbounded transports of delight—it was a greater, although more fleeting, distinction than a ribbon and star nowadays. And when at last the King was washed, and wearing his dressing-gown and nightcap, the nobles withdrew in solemn order of precedence. Louis could paddle round the room in his slippers and play with his dogs for a few moments. Then he could get into bed, close his eyes, and, if it were possible, leave off being a King, while his chief valet came tiptoeing into the room with his truckle bed, on which he slept outside the railing round the royal bed until it was time for him to steal out again and make preparations for the new lever.

At the risk of being monotonous it must be once more pointed out that the day in Louis's life just described was not a special day, nor an occasional day, but the usual, almost invariable day. The courtiers who clustered round him and tried to catch his eye to gain the honour of the candlestick were the descendants of the nobles who, only a generation or two before, had dominated fragments of France from their

moated *châteaux*, who had gambled with their lives for power against Richelieu and Henry IV, who had helped to make Louis's young life a burden to him during the troubles of the Fronde. Did Louis ever taste the sweets of vengeance when he looked round at the fawning horde? It is to be supposed that he did; and furthermore, he must have felt at first a glow of satisfaction at the thought that by the erection of this monstrous system of etiquette he had rid France of one of the dangers which had threatened her.

By inevitable steps the system proceeded to its fulfilment. Young men who had never known times when the peers of France ranked themselves as equals of the King, and who all their lives had been impressed by the manner in which everything considered desirable was entirely dependent upon the royal whim, naturally came to believe in his inherent greatness. Louis to their mind occupied almost exactly the same position as God does to a small child's—he was the giver of good things, the all-knowing, the all-powerful, the inscrutable punisher of infractions of seemingly arbitrary rules, whose immeasurable capacity for doing harm made it inadvisable to question the logic of his actions. It was only natural that Louis should soon be elevated in their minds to a position not far short of divine; that his statue in the Place des Victoires should be dedicated with oriental adoration, and that attachment to the royal cause should become both a cult and a fashion—the two strongest ties which could hold them to him. So it was that at the Revolution the nobility preferred exile or death to desertion.

Yet, at the same time, when the clash came the nobility ranked only as individuals when strengths were measured; they had no following, and could not be expected to have when for more than a century

their whole time had been spent at court instead of among their people. Only here and there—in the Vendée and in Brittany, where it was still customary for noblemen to look after their own estates—was any powerful opposition to the Revolution possible, as soon as Louis XVI had been fool enough to allow the army to be corrupted. The court life upon which Louis insisted reduced the nobility to uselessness and impotence, and deprived it of any possible excuse whatever for its existence.

And while it reacted in this fashion upon the nobility, it reacted inevitably in another upon the King. There were few means of reminding him that he ruled millions of people as well as millions of square miles. Surrounded by a hierarchy of noble blood of careful graduation, it was only natural that in time he should come to regard the others—those poor millions who could not boast quarterings—as unworthy of notice or attention. In the Brahman system of caste the 'untouchables' are a minority; in the Bourbon system they were a vast majority, but in both cases they were not worth considering. Louis was cut off from that affectionate and familiar contact with his people which gave Henry IV his lively sympathy for their troubles, and which never was quite abolished in England. When the people ceased to count in Louis's mind what could be more natural than that he should proceed to follow the dictates of his own likes and dislikes without regard to their agony? If he liked war, he could indulge in it without caring for the lives lost or the treasure expended. He could build palaces without number by the forced labour of the peasantry, and he could lavish millions on his court and his mistresses without being troubled by the knowledge that he was spending two-thirds of

what his wretched people were earning. Even if he should happen to care, he was cut off by etiquette from personal contact with the commonalty and dependent for guidance and information upon the interested advice of his noble or would-be noble Council—for in autocratic France with an efficient police and a powerful centralized government there was no Press to voice an opposition ; criticism of the royal policy meant immediate imprisonment, confiscation, or even death, for Louis could not help thinking what a crime it was for a starveling scribbler to jeer at his handling of fiscal policy when dukes were eager to watch him put his shoes on.

It is this which goes so far towards explaining the gradual transition of Louis's policy from one of pacific development to one of warlike prodigality. He had begun to be surrounded with the complete attributes of royalty in 1660, having already been King for seventeen years, and he had given his support to Colbert's peaceful schemes, with one small interruption, up to 1672. Twelve years of continuous adulation and of court etiquette then bore fruit. Thereupon war follows war, aggression follows aggression ; the taxes grow, the debt mounts, the people starve ; victories bring glory to the King but ruin to the people. The early moderation which brought decided gains at small cost at the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle disappears—what motive is there for moderation ? The double-dealing and unsavoury diplomacy call for no excuse, for Louis has to make excuses to no one. To exterminate the Dutch *canaille* is an obvious royal duty. The King's power and glory must be increased and there is no need whatever to reckon the cost to other people.

The inferences go deeper still. There are the



MARIE THÉRÈSE

From an Engraving after the Painting by Beaubrun

Huguenots to be considered—or rather not to be considered. What business have they to hold a religion other than that which the monarch condescends to hold? And they are a pestilent gang, too. Fifty years ago they dared to oppose the monarch's royal father. They pretend to rights and privileges which are clear infringements on the royal prerogatives. One could never be sure that the unbelievable day would not come when they might dare to oppose Louis le Grand himself. So out upon them! Persecute them, torture them, crowd them into prison, seize their possessions, turn the dragoons loose among their wives and daughters! No fate can be too harsh for those who presume to differ from the godlike King. They count for nothing, but there is no inconsistency in persecuting them.

So with the Jansenists. They seek to draw lessons from a past over which Louis has to confess even he had no control. Such presumption must be rooted out, and the fine flower of Port Royal must be torn to pieces and its petals scattered in the gutter. The majesty of kingship is all important. The Pretender must be recognized as James III of England, regardless of whether such recognition will bring all the weight of England into the scale against France. And how could royalty ever renounce its rights to a succession, and how could such an unroyal assembly as the *Cortes* ever presume to 'confirm' such a renunciation? Kings are kings by right of birth, and the wisdom of God is displayed in His arranging for them to be born to their parents, so Anjou must be made King of Spain, nor can he give up his claims to the kingdom of France.

The pyramid of precedence bears the King upon its summit in solitary grandeur. In consequence he

has no equal in anything ; there is no general as brilliant, no minister as capable, no artist with such taste—and if there is one, so much the worse for him. For a few years the King must bear with those who established their position before his views were completely formed. Turenne and Condé must lead his armies, Colbert must organize his finances, Racine must write plays. But death and old age come (of course) to the King's aid ; Turenne, Colbert, Condé, Racine, Lionne pass off the stage and their places are taken—not filled—by men of less talent, men who would not be so impious as to be better than the King at their own trade. Luxemburg for Turenne, Seignelay for Colbert, forgotten panegyrists for Racine. Death comes just in time to save Louvois from dismissal. Voltaire at the close of Louis's reign finds himself in the Bastille.

So we find that court routine had a potent influence upon French history. The fact that Louvois was able to win the successive alliance of Montespan and Maintenon is not the sole or most important reason why the Ministry of War was favoured at the expense of the Ministry of Finance, nor had the supposititious military instinct of the French people much to do with the wars of Louis XIV. Richelieu, Mazarin, and Louis himself had made it possible for the despot's word to divert unchallenged the people's energies into any channel he chose, but it was left to the chance atmosphere of the court ceremonial to decide how the King should so choose ; it may be taken almost for granted that no king on familiar terms with his people will undertake wars of aggression, while no king will be more ready to resist the aggressions of others.

The object of all the court ceremonial is solely to accentuate the grandeur of the King ; it serves no

other purpose whatever. All the splendid manners of the nobility are only a mask which is very ready to fall. We read of the bedroom of a lady of the court being suddenly raided at night in midwinter, and of her being pelted with snowballs until, in the words of an eyewitness, the room was awash with melted snow. The most hideous practical jokes were perpetrated at small provocation or at none at all, while Louis raised no objection—none of the jokes of course was at his expense.

We find Louis, before he settled down to old age, Maintenon, and religious life, issuing a court order that no one is to eat meat during Lent, but he eats it himself, for Louis, while he believed observance of Lent to be a very Christian duty, was exceedingly fond of good food. No one save Louis and a few others to whom formalism and ceremony are the breath of life really enjoyed all the stiffness and rigidity of court life; the state balls, with the royal family at one end of the hall, the nobility in strict order of precedence ranged down the walls, and the few dancers (who dance at Louis's command) at the farther end, were utterly wearisome affairs to those who took part, despite the impressiveness of the magnificent costumes and jewellery.

Originality, wit, and art wilted and died in the artificial atmosphere of court. People with long memories looked back with a sigh to the brilliant conversation of the hectic little court of Anne of Austria. Louis grew painfully conscious of this deadly dullness, and on several occasions endeavoured to stimulate his courtiers into brilliance. He would collect a little group of the most eminent of his friends, gather them round him in a ring, and almost literally command them to be amusing. The attempt was

naturally foredoomed to failure. Conversation, already feeble, met with sudden death, and Louis had to own himself beaten by proposing a return to the card-tables. Lansquenet and basset were of much more interest to the courtiers than any scintillations of wit. It was not until the rigidity of routine was relieved by speculative cynicism, as under the regency, or by a sense of insecurity and impending disaster as under Louis XVI, that the brilliance of the court revived. Napoleon met with the same difficulty when he tried to revive the state ceremony of Louis XIV; the Imperial receptions wilted into the dullness which was so receptive a target for Talleyrand's epigrams.

Yet it hardly mattered whether the courtiers talked well or badly, or whether they talked at all. Their function in life was to surround the King with a mass of brilliant colour and clockwork solemnity for the benefit of the outside eye. Automata (if they could only have been able to prove ten generations of noble descent) would have served the purpose equally well. Wearing gay coats and ribbons and stars they would have proved to envious foreign courts how much more rich and powerful and expensive was the Sun King, the semi-Apollo, who guided his chariot of dawn across the ceiling of a much more costly palace than any they could afford. Louis thought it was glorious for him to be the most extravagant and most-talked-about man in Europe, and he spared no pains throughout a painstaking life to see that this was so. He even thought it was a help to France (not to the French people, but to a theoretical entity called France) for this to be the case. One must at least grant that he succeeded in the limited objective he set himself. The limits of the objective are the measure of the limits of his mind.

CHAPTER X

VERSAILLES

IT largely began when Colbert purchased the office of Superintendent of the Royal Buildings from its previous holder. Not the King himself with safety could arbitrarily appoint whomever he wished to ministerial positions; the previous holder must be compensated for the loss of an office for which he (or his father) had paid in hard cash. The King was thinking about building and rebuilding a few palaces. There would be ample opportunities, in consequence, for speculation and jobbery, and Colbert saw that the only way in which to keep down the expenses (which were to break his heart in the end) was to take over the superintendence himself. He was already Superintendent of the Finances and Minister of Marine—save for his incorruptibility there were many points of resemblance between Colbert and Pooh Bah, Lord High Everything Else, even to Colbert's desire to prove his unbroken descent from primordial protoplasmal ancestors.

Colbert had already done much to carry the Louvre towards completion (he was responsible to the King for the façade and much of the embellishment), but Louis did not want to live at the Louvre. The Louvre meant Paris, and Louis hated Paris, and its narrow streets and its turbulent populace, and the memories which it recalled of the days when kingship was not half as dignified an occupation as it had since become. Besides, if he lived at the Louvre, it would not be so easy to sunder the nobility from the people, as it was his ambition to do. Louis's ideal was a

court divorced completely from the nation, living, if possible, in its own town. Besides, had not Fouquet, whose name still annoyed him, outdone royalty by the magnificent palace he had built at Vaux? Louis must show that the King could do better than his subjects.

The King's royal father had built himself a little *château* at Versailles, a convenient distance from Paris. Louis had hunted here, had adorned the park, and had given a few fêtes here. Louis liked its situation, saw its possibilities, and upon Versailles he fixed his choice. At first he began modestly enough; he contented himself with adding wings to the original *château*, but he soon found that these additions were not sufficient. This was hardly surprising, seeing that he wanted state apartments for himself, the Queen, and for all the princes and princesses of the royal family, lodgings for nearly a thousand noble gentlemen and ladies, barracks for his guards, both horse and foot, and some sort of accommodation for the thousands and thousands of servants who were necessary to minister to the needs of this host of parasites.

For forty years building proceeded apace. The peasants of the country-side slaved at the unpaid labour of making roads, clearing and levelling the ground, and digging lakes. The army came to their assistance and provided battalions of labourers. On occasions as many as thirty-six thousand men were working at once on the King's palace—and, we are told by Colbert himself, the work was sadly interfered with by the mortality which decimated the labourers just as it did armies in the field. All the roads of France were crowded with huge trees, which were transplanted and carried hundreds of miles to provide shade in the parks. One single contract purchased

twenty-five thousand trees, and since of course the mortality among them was enormous the whole number purchased must have run into hundreds of thousands. Thirty thousand soldiers were turned on to the task of digging a canal from the Eure so that the King might have the pleasure of seeing the fourteen hundred fountains of his park all playing at once ; and this canal did not serve its purpose. An enormous pumping machine was built for the same purpose, and was only faintly successful. Eventually water was brought from the plateau of Satory, conserved in half a dozen vast lakes, and finally accumulated until sufficient was at hand to enable the fountains to play for an hour or two daily while the King was in residence. A monstrous lake gave the King the opportunity of boating when he felt inclined, and to gratify his occasional inclination a thirty-two gun frigate, elaborately carved and gilded, a fleet of galleys, and two hundred and sixty bargemen were ready to hand. Sculptors and bronze-workers were mustered from all over Europe to make the hundreds of fountains and statues which were scattered over the grounds. Every now and then an extension of the building or an alteration in design caused fountains to be removed, trees (transplanted once already) to be dug up, and immense terraces erected by the labour of thousands to be levelled and carted away. Emissaries of the King toured Europe and the West Indies to find him orange-trees ; he had three thousand of them in his orangery. A huge menagerie contained elephants, ostriches, bears, wolves, lions, deer, rare birds, for the amusement and the greater glory of the King and his grandchildren.

At the far end of the lake was reared La Montespan's little porcelain palace, the Trianon ; it actually endured

for nearly twenty years before Louis tired of Trianon and Montespan alike, tore down the palace, and erected another, much larger, of course, of marble, with more terraces and fountains and statuary. It made a nice little change from Versailles; whenever the King wanted a change of air he could board his gilded frigate and, under escort of his galleys, he could sail the three-quarters of a mile down to Trianon, where a little army of servants kept the place ready for his occupation. Versailles and Trianon together did not content him; for country life he built the palace of Marly, a few miles off. Here a deep, swampy valley was drained, the surrounding hills were cut away, more lakes were dug and more fountains built, and a huge square *château* (not infrequently known as the Pavilion of the Sun) was erected on a slight rise in the centre, with a dozen other minor palaces around it. Here again came sculptors and bronze-workers; at one of the fountains stood the horses of Coyzevox, which are known to every Parisian visitor, as they now adorn the entrance of the Tuileries garden. On the opposite side of the *château* was the most beautiful fountain of all—sixty-three lofty marble steps down which ran a continuous cascade of the water for which soldiers and peasants had toiled so hard. Five thousand acres of parkland and forest surrounded the *château*, wherein the court could hunt the stag and make their first halting attempts at playing polo. Time and again it seemed as if the work was finished, and as if the place was so beautiful that nothing more needed to be done, but always it appeared that some new improvement was called for, some other hill to be cut away to improve the prospect, some further arrangement for running water to delight the eyes and ears of aesthetic visitors. Yet even while these improve-

ments were in progress Marly served its purpose ; it gave the King somewhere to which he could retire and live an informal and retired country life. For there was a striking and immense difference between etiquette at Marly and etiquette at Versailles. At Marly the courtiers wore their hats while walking in the grounds with the King ; at Versailles they carried them. Otherwise life was the same ; it was of course not to be expected that the King would make any concession, additional to this important one, to the informality of country life.

Besides Versailles, Trianon, and Marly, Louis ordered a good deal more building. St. Germain was entirely rebuilt, the Louvre was altered, and, of course, the Invalides was built at his command. But it was Versailles upon which he concentrated most of his energy, and upon which most money was poured out. Begun from motives which have already been discussed, the original plans were elaborated, as far as can be guessed, largely for the purpose of pleasing Mme de Montespan, for Louis coveted vastly the good opinion of that blue-blooded and high-spirited divinity. He would show her what a Bourbon could do, and, more especially, show her the grandness of the conceptions of one Bourbon in particular. So wing was added to wing, terrace to terrace, until Louis was too far infected with the building and rebuilding mania to be able to check himself. Moreover, it must be remembered that, vast as Versailles was by the time Louis called for a halt, it was still too small for his purpose—numbers of the petty nobility were still petitioning him for lodgings in the palace which he was unable to grant.

The first object was to impress the new-comer, and if the entrance court and the guards of honour had

not achieved that end, surely the ambassadors' staircase would do so, with its marble steps, bronzes, and mural paintings and its inevitable fountain—all, alas ! now swept away by Louis's successor. It was at the head of this tremendous ascent that Louis received important guests, dressed usually in cloth of gold so covered with diamonds that the eye could not bear to rest on him. Any frowardness which could survive such a climb to such a goal was hardly to be found in this world. From the head of the staircase ran a whole series of magnificent halls, opening the one from the other, the Salon of Venus with its perfect mosaics, the Salon of Diana, decorated in crimson and gold, the Salon of Mars in green and gold, the Salon of Mercury in marble, and the Salon of Apollo, the throne-room, with its eight foot high throne of solid silver.

But these wonderful rooms were only preliminaries, for passing on from the Salon of Apollo the visitor turned the corner to the garden side of the palace and the climax of the whole crescendo of splendour—the masterpiece of Mansart and Caffieri—the Salons of War and of Peace and the Grand Gallery, the Hall of Mirrors. For two hundred and forty feet the Grand Gallery faces the gardens of Versailles through its seventeen enormous windows, backed on the other side by seventeen enormous mirrors, while on the ceiling thirty of Lebrun's paintings display thirty real or imaginary exploits of Louis. It was a magnificent room, well adapted to any grand function of state ; it was quite well suited in 1871 to the Proclamation of the German Empire.

To-day even the magnificence of painting and statuary cannot properly convey to the visitor all the wonder of this palace, for it must always be borne in

mind that in Louis's day it was furnished in silver—silver chandeliers, silver chairs and tables, silver vases and busts, even silver tubs for the orange-trees. And all this magnificence was solely on Louis's account. Although he condescended to allow pictures of Alexander and Cyrus, Augustus and Caesar and Nebuchadnezzar (were the courtiers of Louis still too impressed with his grandeur, or did this last name ever call a smile to their lips?) to adorn his walls along with pictures of his own achievements, every one realized inevitably that these potentates were only present to pay him homage. Everything about the palace said or shouted or screamed 'Louis, Louis, Louis'.

Along the side of the Grand Gallery ran what nowadays are called 'the private apartments of Louis XIV', which is a misnomer, for we have already seen how much privacy Louis enjoyed ('experienced' might be a better word) during his reign. That hackneyed old expression 'as much privacy as a gold-fish' comes irresistibly to mind in this connexion—the temptation to use it has been stoutly fought, but is overwhelming in the end. The third side of the palace on this first floor was occupied by the apartments of the Queen, and, eventually, by those of Mme de Maintenon. The King's room maintained the note of high magnificence. The friezes and gildings and furniture were perfect in their way (the gilt reliefs of children in the Grand Antechamber, the *Œil-de-Bœuf*, are perhaps the most beautiful and certainly the most human work of art in the whole palace) and the blue marble fire-places and the big bed with its canopy and white plumes told of the grandeur of the King. So important was this bed in the etiquette of the court that ladies passing it at any time of day

had to curtsy and gentlemen had to bow—a function perhaps no more foolish than the modern naval custom of saluting the quarter-deck. The King's cabinets displayed diamond-studded desks and inkstands, and the jewel rooms beyond were filled with the gems which Louis had collected and not yet bestowed upon the lady of his fancy. The medal room was filled with a notable collection; it will be remembered that the Academie des Inscriptions was founded originally for the purpose of composing suitable inscriptions for medals struck to commemorate the exploits of the King.

Yet with all this magnificence it hardly seems as if the first desirable attribute of a house—habitability—was attained. St. Simon baldly describes the King's room as 'dull, stuffy, and stinking'. The immense size of the rooms and the distance between kitchens and living-rooms meant that food arrived quite cold. When, a hundred and fifty years later, Napoleon III reopened Versailles for state receptions he found it necessary to install an additional kitchen half-way where food could be reheated before being served. The whole palace was indeed a chilly place in winter. The two fire-places in Louis's bedroom did not prevent water from freezing there on a cold day, and it is credibly reported that during the bad winter of 1709 even the wine on the tables froze—which implies a temperature well below zero Fahrenheit. The immense crowd of courtiers standing about the rooms frequently found their teeth chattering with the cold. Heating, lighting, and ventilation were all at fault; very probably the systems employed at Versailles were in advance of the age, but that is not praise for them.

And as for the final result, Louis had built the most expensive palace in the world's history. The

whole strength and wealth of a nation, and the whole brains and taste of a continent, had been called in to assist. Yet it is a bold man who will say that this most expensive creation is the most beautiful the world has ever seen. Of Marly we cannot judge, for Marly was destroyed under the Empire. But Versailles and Trianon still stand. They are impressive and magnificent, both internally and externally. They obviously cost a great deal of money. But it is difficult to say they are beautiful, even if the mind flinches from describing them as ugly. They are not ugly in the sense that Buckingham Palace is ugly ; but here and there in the interior are hints of the repulsive lack of taste which distinguished later ages. These are easily excused and forgotten, but the whole general effect is not one of beauty. Only occasionally does some fragment rouse the sensations which are called up so freely by masterpieces of Greek, of Gothic, and of Renaissance architecture. There is absence of ugliness, but little beauty. And that can hardly be called extensive praise for the result of fifty years of labour on Louis's part—even though it is more than can be granted to most royal palaces.

The cost of the whole series of efforts is not quite easily found. It is generally believed that just before his death Louis destroyed a great part of the accounts by his own hand, possibly to avoid the criticisms of later generations, although it is hard to believe that Louis could have thought any criticism possible. But various painstaking and exact historians have ferreted through departmental accounts, and M. Eckard finally arrived at a minimum estimate of well over a hundred million livres. To compare this with present-day money is a difficult and necessarily arbitrary proceeding, but twenty million sterling would be rather like

the figure. A more just comparison can be found in the fact that the annual French receipts at the Treasury in a good year amounted to about sixty million livres. So that Versailles and its adjuncts cost France two full years' revenue, and a fair comparison would be to say that the palaces cost France a sum as large as four hundred million sterling would have appeared to the British Government just prior to 1914.

Nor does this of course represent anything like the full cost. There were thousands of servants and gardeners and huntsmen to be maintained, to say nothing of the court itself. We find Louis continually making large presents to his courtiers to enable them to support the expense of court life, and the majority of noblemen about him received pensions and sinecures. The vulgar little joke about the initial cost of a red nose being nothing compared to the cost of its upkeep comes irresistibly to mind. From the very vagueness and the fluctuations of this source of expenditure it is very difficult indeed to form any idea of its average amount, but a bold estimate would be that it amounted to something between a twentieth and a tenth of the national income.

Louis found justification for this enormous prodigality, although he would indignantly have denied any need for justification. In accordance with the economic ideas of the time (and the same opinions can even be found publicly stated to-day) the King was doing good by spending money in his own country. According to Louis, France actually benefited by having thousands of men turned on to the labour of building his palaces ; he was doing France a good turn by filling his rooms with silver furniture bought with money squeezed from the lean purses of the peasantry ; the money came from Frenchmen and was restored to Frenchmen

by his purchases, and the added advantage was gained of having plenty of money circulating round. That of course was the result of the old theory that money meant wealth ; Louis left out of account the vast unproductive expenditure of labour and talent. It took hard experience to convince him and France of the wrongheadedness of the theory, and in any case the foundation of Louis's theory was faulty, because much of his material and a good deal of the labour must have been imported. Elephants and orange-trees are not indigenous to France.

Actually, Versailles was a vulgar gesture. It was meant to display to Europe how rich and how extravagant France was ; it showed foreign potentates that Louis commanded wealth beyond their wildest dreams. It was a gesture of the same order as the wearing of a fur coat by a purse-proud woman, and in the same way it called for emulation and imitation. All over Europe little despots thought it necessary to their dignity to build palaces on the outskirts of their capitals. Potsdam earned for itself in the following century the name of ' the Versailles of Berlin ', and Frederick the Great could think of no better way of proving his wealth, after the Seven Years' War, than of building the immense and ugly New Palace. Leopold I of Austria began in 1696 to build his palace of Schönbrunn, with its fifteen hundred rooms. At Karlsruhe and Stuttgart and a dozen other places, palaces began to spring up, built with money wrung from the bowels of a ruined peasantry, surrounded, of course, by terraced parks with sheets of ornamental water and fountains and orangeries and menageries, and with all the other follies which became as significant of royalty as crowns and sceptres.

And in those palaces the little princes held their

overgrown courts, and were assisted into their breeches in the morning and helped out of them at night by the blue-blooded officials in the presence of admiring crowds of blue-blooded 'vons' and 'zus', and addressed their eldest sons with the utmost formality as 'Monseigneur', and neglected their wives and went in solemn procession, by water if possible, to visit expensive mistresses established in expensive marble palaces adjacent. This delicate imitative flattery must have been enormously gratifying to the French people.

CHAPTER XI

THE BEGINNING OF THE DUEL

THERE was an overwhelming number of reasons for a war against the Dutch. They had been the prime movers of the Triple Alliance, which had balked Louis's last invasion of the Spanish Netherlands, and Louis thirsted for revenge. They were Protestant and republican, ruled by a burgher oligarchy utterly repugnant to Louis. They were very serious competitors in the carrying and manufacturing industries which Colbert thought so much of. They disposed of wealth which Louis coveted, they controlled the mouth of the Rhine, which he desired to see French, and they possessed in Amsterdam the finest continental North Sea port, and, in their treaty with Spain, a means of control over Antwerp, its one possible rival. There were motives of policy in abundance.

And Louvois thirsted to see the army he had created in action again. Besides, war would naturally increase the power and influence of the war minister. Louvois proceeded to urge Louis into war, and he used every measure he could think of. He showed Louis his splendid troops ; by reviews and manœuvres he encouraged Louis in his already pronounced military predilections. He stimulated his dislike for the Dutch. He joined hands with Mme de Montespan. On the side of peace was Colbert, already alarmed by the expenditure on Versailles. Colbert feared for his budding navy, for his budding industries, for his budding solvency. The war of devolution had shown him how many obstacles there lay in the path towards

annexation of these troublesome neighbours. But Colbert could not produce arguments half as convincing as those of Louvois. His dull industries could not display anything half as fascinating as ranks of gleaming bayonets and cuirasses and tossing plumes. He was too stiff and cold and moral to win Montespan over to his side. That lady added her arguments to those of Louvois, who, she fondly believed, would be a stanch friend. All the nobility, whose one outlet for their energies was now the army, clamoured for war. The populace had no voice. Louis decided to make war on the Dutch.

He did his best in his painstaking way to ensure success. He had three hundred thousand well-trained troops in his army; the Dutch had only twenty thousand bad ones. Henrietta of Orleans had secured Charles II's neutrality by the Treaty of Dover, and then her death had enabled Louis to marry Orleans to the daughter of the Elector Palatine and secure that ruler's friendship. Sweden was detached from the Dutch alliance by Lionne's careful diplomacy. Various petty princes of the Rhenish district allied themselves to Louis. The United Provinces were left friendless, and seemed quite unable to oppose the King. Louvois, Turenne, and Louis between them worked out a plan of campaign which would carry the army into Holland without violating the neutrality of the Spanish Netherlands and without necessitating the reduction of too many fortresses. Louvois threw himself with fervour into the business of arranging depots and supplies.

By 1672 all was prepared. A hundred thousand men were massed on the frontier under Louis, Turenne, and Condé. The Duke of Lorraine, who saw his own fate close at hand, tried to raise objections, but at

once another army poured into his territory, seized his capital, and drove him away, a homeless, penniless fugitive. Then Louis gave the word and set his forces in motion for Amsterdam. The friendship of the Elector of Cologne secured him a free passage through Julich by which he turned the whole line of the Maas ; he passed the Rhine at Wesel, and marched on to where William of Orange, a boy of twenty-two, was mustering a few straggling troops along the line of the Yssel. Turenne pointed out that there was no need to force the passage ; it could be turned by recrossing the Rhine. Louis acted upon the advice. The copper pontoons which Martinet had devised were called into service, and the army was hurried over the Rhine. William had only sent a handful of cavalry to observe the passage ; these fired a few shots, one of which wounded Condé, and retired with all the speed the situation demanded. The point of crossing was marked by a flimsy building intended as head-quarters in peace-time for the officers whose business it was to collect toll from passing ships.

In Paris, and all over France, this feat of arms aroused the most astonishing transports of admiration. No mention was made of the fact that the passage had occurred at the shallowest and slackest portion of all the Rhine's long length. According to the panegyrists whose productions formed the sole source of information to the French public, Louis had led his army across the deep and rapid Rhine in face of an overwhelming force resting on a vast fortress (unfortunately absent from any map) known as Tollhus. All France echoed with praise of Louis for his skill and courage.

But even while these praises were being poured out Louis was throwing away the greatest opportunity he

Austria ever produced, was to flinch for similar reasons from a project hardly more daring. And—and—Louis all his life showed a hankering after sieges in preference to battles ; some people said it was because success in them was more certain and the danger not so great.

However it may be, Louis now halted perforce, while William, to whom at this moment time was as precious as his own life blood, flung himself into the business of organizing opposition. A convenient riot murdered the two de Witts and freed his hands. His emissaries posted all over Europe seeking allies. The Great Elector of Brandenburg inclined to his side and set his troops in motion ; the Emperor followed suit. And Louis left his army and returned home to the triumphant celebrations of Paris, to his lakes and his terraces, and to the white arms of Montespan. All that autumn the enemies of France were furbishing up their weapons.

The next year Spain joined in, although her aid was of little account. There was a fine siege awaiting Louis, and while Turenne faced Montecuculi, Louis, with Vauban to advise him, took Maestricht after thirteen days of open trenches. Louis's diligence and attention to detail were useful when it was a question of a siege, and the capture of Maestricht in that time was a quite brilliant achievement. The panegyrists, however, compared it to Rocroi, and Louis came back again to receive all the adulation which a well-drilled Press and a misinformed populace could heap upon him. But the tide had definitely turned. De Ruyter beat off Prince Rupert and the French and English fleets, in the two battles of Schooneveld, where Spragge was killed ; there could be no hope now of invading Holland from the sea. France was decidedly on the defensive, and Turenne on the Rhine was opposed by

greatly superior numbers which captured Bonn and prepared to carry the war across the frontier.

France was now in serious danger. The English people disliked the alliance with a Catholic despot against a Protestant constitutional State, besides being disappointed by the results and alarmed by the depredations of Dutch privateers; and before very long public opinion forced Charles into making peace and deserting France, although a detachment of English troops, with whom was Marlborough, remained in French pay. Various Rhenish States, influenced by the capture of Bonn, declared against France. Only a gigantic effort on the part of Louis could save her from humiliation.

The effort was made. For the time building at Versailles and elsewhere was suspended. Colbert produced all sorts of tricks of financial legerdemain to find money for the army. The portion of the Netherlands in French occupation was put under terrible requisitions for money and supplies. To have something to bargain with Louis set out again on the conquest of Franche Comté; that province was overrun in a six weeks' campaign which provided further bloodless laurels for the King. Turenne displayed his abilities at their best. He won the battle of Sinzheim, desolated the Palatinate so as to hinder the allies' advance at this point, checked them again at Enzheim on their crossing the Rhine at Strasburg, and then, making consummate use of the possession of Franche Comté, which opened the Gap of Belfort to him, he launched out on his famous winter campaign, which culminated in the victories of Mulhausen and Turkheim and the clearing of Alsace from the enemy. In the Netherlands, William fought his first battle and Condé his last. William attempted to surprise Condé,

failed, retreated, and was caught at Senef. For the first time the trained valour of the French battalions was pitted against the stubborn discipline of the Dutch and Spanish infantry and William's Danish mercenaries. Losses on both sides were appalling—those of the French were in great part due to Condé's excessive temerity—and in the end no real decision was arrived at, although William lost his baggage.

So that when the spring of 1675 arrived France seemed to be triumphing over her difficulties. Louvois took further sieges in hand; he captured Liège and Dinant, while Turenne flung himself upon Montecuculi. He was successful in a series of manœuvres which has since been considered his greatest achievement. He forced Montecuculi to fall back to Salzbach, and to accept battle in a hopeless position. Victory for France seemed certain; Turenne was confident that in a few weeks he would be dictating terms of peace in Vienna itself. 'I have them,' he said; 'they shall not escape again.' As he said this a stray bullet struck him down. His army went to pieces, and Montecuculi swept it back over the Rhine and proceeded with the reconquest of Alsace.

That chance shot ruined the last opportunity France had of re-establishing herself as supreme in Europe. At one moment she had been on the brink of enormous success, and the next she was on the brink of enormous disaster. Crequy was defeated and forced to surrender. The King's army was brought to a halt by the necessity of sending detachments to the forces on the Rhine. Condé, sated with glory and crippled with gout, was haled from his retirement at Chantilly to stem the tide of invasion in Alsace. Almost everywhere disaster seemed to threaten.

For the only triumphs France gained in this period

Colbert was responsible. The navy, which he had taken under his care, had grown steadily. He managed to get rid of d'Estrées, the soldier Louis had placed in command, and promoted a real sailor, du Quesne, to the command in the Mediterranean. For sea-power, now that Spain had declared against France, was of utmost vital importance. Command of the Mediterranean meant for France that she could interpose between Spain and her subject territories in Italy, Naples, Sicily, and the Milanese. More than this, for the main communication between Spain and Austria, her chief enemies, ran by the old-established route through Genoa (habitually friendly to Spain), Milan and the Brenner Pass. A victorious French fleet could cut the coalition in half; it would threaten the treasure fleets upon which Spain depended so greatly; it would be able to assist the turbulent Catalans; it would guard the sensitive south coast against possible raids; it would serve to overawe Savoy; it meant the safeguarding of the south-eastern frontier against invasion from the Milanese. Sea power! It meant all the difference between safety and extreme peril. Colbert read the lessons of history aright when he persuaded Louis to divert to the navy some few of the millions needed for Versailles, and again at this moment when the French naval strength was sent round to the Mediterranean with a man at its head.

Du Quesne had fought in many seas and under more than one flag; he had served as privateersman and as naval officer; he had led the Swedish fleet to victory over the Danes at Gothenburg. The Dutch, ever a maritime nation, saw the importance of defeating his aims, and sent the greatest Dutch sailor of all, de Ruyter, with a squadron to aid the Spaniards. But the Spanish navy had sadly declined since the days

of Lepanto and the Armada. Spanish ships were more of a hindrance than a help, and de Ruyter found, by the opposite kind of experience to that which he had known in the early part of the war, that fleets of different nations do not fight well in company. Two desperate battles were fought in the Gulf of Catania and off Stromboli; the allies were defeated and de Ruyter received his death-wound, dying miserably at Syracuse. The French fleet rode supreme in the Mediterranean—a marvellous achievement for a nation which since the days of the Romans had never made any showing in maritime affairs. The profits were enormous; the unrest in Sicily flamed into active revolt, aided by a French contingent commanded by Mme de Montespan's brother; Savoy ceased from troubling, and rich prizes were brought in dozens into French ports.

On land in this year the war proceeded in the languid way characteristic of the period, now that Turenne was dead and Condé an invalid. Louis took yet another town in Flanders; the allies captured Philipsburg on the Rhine. William had challenged battle with Louis under the walls of Bouchain, but Louis refused. Hard things were said of Louis; those of his courtiers who were not blinded by his splendour hinted that the Bourbon courage had declined since the days of Henri Quatre. Perhaps it had, but it called for an iron nerve to decide on a battle in those days, when vastly expensive professional armies shot each other to pieces without yielding or quailing. The slaughter of Senef was still fresh in men's minds; lives were, literally, by no means cheap before conscription became the fashion, and the wish became the father of the thought that wars could be won without battles being fought.

The campaign of 1677 seemed to promise similar results. The King went on with his favourite sieges. Valenciennes and Cambrai fell to him, and he returned to enjoy further triumphs. Orleans, his brother, was left in command of the Flanders army, and astonished the world by fighting a battle and winning it, at Cassel, over William of Orange, and then by following up his success so that all Flanders fell into French hands. It was the height of impertinence and unwisdom to succeed brilliantly where the King had contented himself with smaller, safer successes. Orleans was promptly recalled and never again received a command. Louis must be the only living Bourbon to gain victories, and if he saw fit not to gain them no other member of his family might attempt to supply his deficiency.

But by now whispers in favour of peace had grown louder. The burgher party in Holland were worried by their losses at sea and by the expense of the war. England (or rather the English people) was alarmed by the growth of a new sea power across the Channel, and was irritated by the sternness with which Louis made use of his belligerent rights of visit and search and capture of contraband. Public opinion was coming near to forcing Charles to declare against Louis—a proceeding which would have made an end of the subsidies Charles found so useful. William of Orange contrived to gain his assent to his marriage with Mary of England, and thereby made further strides in the esteem of the English. To save himself from having to take decided action one way or the other Charles put himself forward as a mediator—a mediator with the whole naval strength of England behind him. Louis, too, was drifting in favour of peace. War was very expensive, and the ranks of his

well-trained veterans were sadly depleted. Negotiations were begun.

It was the United Provinces which were the heart and soul of the coalition against Louis. If he could detach them he could take what he would of Spain. Something had to be sacrificed to gain their goodwill, and Louis soon determined on what it should be. Not territory; no towns or fortresses—it was not consonant with the great King's dignity to cede territory. Instead he knocked out the keystone of Colbert's great edifice of Protection. Colbert was not popular in France and his feelings did not matter. By a promise of the restoration of the tariff of 1664 between France and the United Provinces the hearts of the burgher party were won, and peace was certain. Nothing William could do could prevent it, even though he fought a bloody pitched battle at Mons four days after the signing of peace.

The loser by the peace was, of course, unhappy Spain, who had not begun the struggle, had come to the rescue of the Dutch, and had been abruptly abandoned by them, and who had neither the will nor the means to continue the struggle. Franche Comté was delivered over to France, bringing her a long stride nearer the Rhine and vastly improving her frontier both for the purposes of offence and defence. There was a wholesale exchange of towns in the Netherlands, whereby, among others, Charleroi became Spanish again and Ypres French, with the net result of improving the French frontier.

Louis thus abandoned for the time that conquest of the Dutch which had been his avowed object in making war—nothing, discreetly, was said which might recall his failure, and by his commercial treaty he had deprived Colbert's protective measures of all

their efficiency; if protection is in itself a doubtful blessing, there is no question at all as to the uselessness of a tariff with as large a gap in it as Louis had made. But this was hardly realized; what the world saw was the continued success of the French arms and the rapid extension eastwards. The wretched Duke of Lorraine lost both the shadow and the substance of his duchy; France held the whole country while he became a mercenary in the Austrian army.

So Louis was at the height of all his power and glory. He directed the largest army in Europe and a successful navy. His palace and his court were more splendid than anything ever since Imperial Rome. His subjects were at a loss to display all their admiration. The Parisians held grave debate as to what title they could confer upon him. They hesitated over 'Most Illustrious' and similar clumsinesses, and finally decided upon the concise, if not very adulatory 'Great'. The city, having made up its mind, proclaimed him 'Louis le Grand' with full ceremony, and the world seemed to agree.

No one as yet was conscious that Louis had flung away his best chance of world supremacy; that at the very beginning of the six years' war just completed he had allowed his pedantic dilatoriness not only to rob him of the Netherlands but to set up in power the one skilful rival left in all Europe, who was to work tirelessly and unendingly until France was curbed and fettered and exhausted, and until Louis's splendour was not merely a hollow sham but known to be so. Louis may have gained Franche Comté and Lorraine, but he had raised up a tireless enemy. He had enabled Europe to learn how to devise a coalition and how to sustain it; France was now the observed of a jealous and powerful opposition. It would take a clever man to

keep peace, and it would need a cleverer man to make war. Louis was about to learn the lesson which Napoleon learned afterwards, and other monarchs, to their cost, after him, to the effect that an extended dominion bears with it the approaching need of a further extension for security's sake, and that again a further extension, until at length the overgrowth is healed at once or later, only by the drastic surgical operation of defeat.

CHAPTER XII

THE KING

LOUIS'S career presents an interesting study in developing self-centredness, the reasons for which are largely to be found in his environment—in the court etiquette and in the unmeasured adulation heaped upon him. It is a nice point to decide whether the absence of great men in the State service in the last part of the reign was the cause or the effect, or both, of the increasing tendency of the King to rule solely by his own whim.

The gradation exhibited in the capacities of the leading officers of State as the reign progresses is indeed striking. Colbert, Louvois, Lionne, Turenne, and Condé, are succeeded by Seignelay, Barbesieux, Pomponne, Crequy, and Luxemburg, men of less note but of considerable distinction. Then their places are taken by smaller men still, whose names history hardly condescends to remember. Ponchartrain was helpless in Seignelay's place. It almost savours of the ludicrous to see men like Tallard and Villeroy commanding the armies of Condé and Turenne. There are some indications that this decline of merit is largely Louis's own fault and not the result of inevitable circumstances. Catinat was allowed, even encouraged, to go into retirement to permit of the advancement of the court favourite, Villars. Schomberg, of course, was driven into exile. Orleans, perhaps the most gifted prince of the blood, was retained at Versailles after his one victory at Cassel. The loss of Louvois called forth no regret from Louis—he was heard to remark later that death had rid him of a man he could

not endure. It is undoubted that he chose to fill the vacant offices with young, inexperienced men whom he could keep well in hand, and who would never presume to question the royal common sense.

Colbert must have had much to do with this. From about 1666 onwards his life was one long protest—protests against the expenditure on Versailles, protests against wars, against the treatment of the Huguenots, against the commercial treaty with the Dutch. He must have wearied Louis almost to breaking point by the way in which he persistently disagreed with all the schemes nearest to Louis's heart. Always lingering in Louis's mind must have been the memory of Mazarin's long ministry; he must have seen how history was already tending to attribute all the glory of the earlier part of the century to Richelieu and not to Louis's father. Louis naturally came to insist upon puppet ministers who would neither vex him with argument nor presume to claim a share of his glory in the eyes of posterity.

Yet this leads naturally on to another and equally striking point in Louis's character—his patience and equable temper. At any time a word from him would have sent Colbert or Louvois or any other unpleasant character into retirement, into a dungeon, or to the scaffold. But he never made such use of his power save in the single instance of Fouquet, who deserved nearly all the punishment he received. Seignelay, whom Louis grew to hate, was left in office until his death. Compared with the only English monarch since the Middle Ages whose personal power was at all comparable to that of Louis—Henry VIII—Louis was a model of moderation. Henry VIII's reign began with the execution of Empson and Dudley, ended with the execution of Surrey, and was marked at regular

intervals with the executions of More, of Cromwell, and the massacre of two queens, with their attendants. The fifty-odd years of Louis's personal reign are almost free of such stains ; practically the only man to meet his death on the scaffold for treason was the Chevalier de Rohan, who was taken in the act of rebellion. With Henry in Louis's place, what would have been the fates of Montespan and of Seignelay, or even of Colbert and Louvois ?

This moderation towards people with whom he had been in personal contact grows doubly significant when it is compared to the bloody ferocity exhibited towards the Cevennois, the merciless devastation of the Palatinate, and the light-hearted fashion in which the armies of France were sent to destruction on the Rhine and in Flanders. Louis could only be merciless by deputy ; his admirable personal moderation seems in fact to be rather an indication of some sort of weakness than of strength, and of this hint of weakness other confirmation can be found. Even Frenchmen came to comment on Louis's partiality for sieges as opposed to pitched battles ; his enemies sneered continually at this foible, drew malicious morals from the sieges of Namur and Liège in 1692 and 1693, and ended by dubbing him ' King of Reviews '. The classic instance of the indecisive invasion of Holland in 1672 has already been noticed. Louis could make admirable plans, but he lacked the moral courage to carry them out personally with the fierce determination demanded.

That expression, ' King of Reviews ', is significant in more ways than one, as it is illustrative in addition of the appeal martial pomp and ceremonial made to him. A weakness for military display is a very usual characteristic. In pacific London swarms of people each year struggle to witness the ' trooping of the

colour'. Napoleon's favourite recreation was a review of whatever troops were handy. Frederick William of Prussia succumbed to the lure in a fashion which has become almost proverbial. Louis was no exception; he, too, knew the thrill given by the glitter of a line of sabres and cuirasses. His daily inspection of the household troops at Versailles was quite in the style of Frederick William's or Frederick the Great's minute examinations. There is nothing in the little weakness worthy of blame; soldiers at drill are quite as fascinating as the majority of theatrical performances. Trouble only arises when such a weakness is allowed to direct policy. Frederick William's passion for his army kept him at peace, which was a very desirable result; Louis's passion tended to urge him into war. For Louvois early found that a brilliant military display would soften Louis's heart towards him, and Louvois, as the creator of the army and minister of war was naturally in favour of war. Colbert had nothing he could use similarly—he could not thrill the King with a display of rows of figures, and by a freak of fate the ships he built had not for Louis the appeal of the regiments Louvois created.

This leads us naturally on to the consideration of the influences to which Louis was susceptible. It must at once be stated that Louis was always on the look out for attempts to influence him, and he invariably was offended by them when he detected them. It was for him alone to decide on policy; he would have no Richelieus about him. Nor, to his credit, would he have any Pompadours—even though the name Pompadour had no significance at present. Montespan bullied him into granting places and titles, but she made no attempt at directing the State, and any such attempt would have been keenly resented. Indirect methods

had to be employed instead. Thus Louis was lured into war (apart from his reckless disregard of the consequences to his people) partly by Louvois's skilful working upon his military tendencies and upon his desire for personal aggrandizement, and partly by the continual efforts, each so small as to be unnoticed, of all the people with whom Louis came in contact and whose alliance Louvois was clever enough to gain, principal among whom of course were Mmes de Montespan and de Maintenon. In religious matters it was the continual gentle efforts of his spiritual advisers which were successful—the great effort at displacing Montespan which was planned by Maintenon, Bossuet, and Père la Chaise came to speedy grief, as has been related in another chapter. It took the most delicate management to induce Louis to do anything which did not occur to him spontaneously. In later years Mme de Maintenon learnt the art, with the result that she had a great deal to do with the apportioning of places and of offices, but no one else ever acquired the same skill—compared to her Louvois was a blunderer and Colbert (more's the pity) completely incapable. The system meant, in fact, that the fate of France and of Europe depended on the tact with which a crotchety old man was handled.

The mention of Père la Chaise and of Bossuet leads naturally to the consideration of Louis's religious opinions. It is only to be expected that in the matter of outward observance Louis was clearly devout. He heard Mass every day of his life—but it would have been awkward if he had not, for it would have upset the whole daily routine of the court. But beside this there can hardly be any doubt that Louis was sincerely religious. He contrived, as plenty of other people do, to reconcile in his mind the thirty years of adultery in

which he lived with the practice of the Christian religion. In the latter third of his life, when this anomaly was cleared up his sincerity redoubled itself and bigotry made itself apparent. Free-thinking of any kind was abhorrent to him. Nevertheless, one can hardly help believing that he would mentally class free-thinking along with republicanism. Forms and ceremonies counted for so much with him. A man who went to Mass was not only worshipping his Maker but he was doing what the King did—and it would be a ticklish business to decide which motive would be more pleasing to Louis. Another side of the question is Louis's ignorance of the refinements of religious thought. He was not a profound student of anything in particular, and especially not of religion. He had his belief, admittedly coloured by his prejudices, but—unlike Henry VIII, who, according to the fashion of his time, could split doctrinal hairs as well as anybody—he had to depend on his spiritual advisers for theory and practice. Hence we find him pushing independence of the Pope as far as he naturally could—this is what we would expect—but halting as soon as his advisory clergy were scared by the possibility of a separate Gallican Church being set up. The feud between Jansenists and Jesuits was decided in favour of the Jesuits because they had the ear of the King. The much more important persecution of the Huguenots was the result of a whole combination of similar circumstances ; Mme de Maintenon had a taste for conversion ; Louvois wanted to please her ; some fanatics were in a position to appeal to the King ; his other priestly advisers miscalculated the possible harm arising from persecution ; he himself was willing enough from reasons already discussed. The joint result of all these factors was a convulsion of persecution far

exceeding, it must be believed, the aims and ambitions of any one of the parties concerned. That, of course, is only a reason and not an excuse. Yet here Louis's formalism exerted its blighting influence. If he was a sincere Catholic he must do all he could to eradicate heresy. No flexibility in favour of the good of the State could come into play. Besides, Louis had to depend on Catholic advisers for opinions on the ease with which Protestants could be converted—he could not possibly consult a Protestant on the point—and of course he received the inevitable answer. It was the penalty of consistency.

It is this consistency which is the leading trait of Louis's character. No one in the least inconsistent could have borne with the continuous formality of his life. Every day for fifty odd years without a break he dressed, dined, supped, undressed, and performed every other action of his life in accordance with a rigid routine and under the eyes of a crowd of people. Any one whose mental condition was not of Louis's peculiar kind could not have endured it. Kings since Louis's day have been known to go off on little holidays *en garçon*; Louis never did. Most ordinary souls after, say, the thousandth repetition of the cumbrous ceremonial of their own lever, would be tempted to shout or to seek out a windmill over which to throw the night-bonnet which took such an important part in the solemn robing; Louis never did. Every night of his life he went through the inane repetition of selecting some one to hold his candlestick with all the dignity and pomp which he believed the importance of the choice to demand. He would have been not merely annoyed but shocked at the suggestion that he might perhaps like to dine one day in private.

Napoleon, of course, thought differently. Anxious

though he was to revive the old tradition of the Bourbons, he flinched from the kind of bird-cage private life they had made usual. He maintained much of the public ceremonial, but he established a rigid barrier between public and private existence. He dressed with the assistance of an odd valet or two, and Talleyrand, his grand chamberlain, was not compelled to consider his most important duty the handing of the imperial shirt to His Imperial Majesty. But then, of course, Napoleon was well over thirty before he ever had a grand chamberlain.

The man who could enjoy this constant routine must of course have been a man of habit, a man of forms and precedents, quite apart from being a man with an over-healthy good opinion of himself. Naturally he would approve of continuous meddling on the part of his civil service with the private affairs of his subjects; it was natural that he should give Colbert his support in his constant supervision of private enterprise (which eventually called forth the protest '*Laissez-faire*' which has since, with an inevitable change of meaning, given its name to a school of economic thought.) He was not alone in this painfully paternal supervision. On the other side of the Rhine the Great Elector was establishing a Hohenzollern tradition on the same lines, which was to endure until even now the Prussians are the most heavily-fathered citizens in the world.

In France the system broke down, but that was not Colbert's fault and only indirectly Louis's. Forty years of war and of Versailles left France with nothing to supervise. The India companies established under government patronage wilted into bankruptcy; the manufactures that Colbert laboured over so painfully collapsed under the treble strain of taxation, competi-

tion, and naval blockade ; save for the manufacture of articles of comparative luxury, in the designing and selling of which the French seem to have a peculiar genius, French industry had, by the end of the War of the Spanish Succession, declined into the one necessary, poverty-stricken business of agriculture, while the civil service, corrupted by the forced sale of offices, and hampered by lack of money, could neither devise nor carry through any scheme whatever regarding public welfare. The greater part of the French people lived as best they could on about one-tenth of what they earned, and were only happy in that they were not told how to spend that tenth.

Yet, despite this cessation of supervision, Louis worked very hard indeed, and the older he grew the harder he worked. When he first began to take over the reins of government he held five or six councils a week, which sat every morning from nine o'clock till one, or even later ; when Colbert, Lionne, and Louvois had disappeared from the scene he held continual audiences with his new ministers every evening for hours at a stretch. Mme de Maintenon's letters describe how hard he worked on these occasions, and she was in a position to know, because the audiences were largely held in her bedroom, and even proceeded, in accordance with the curious custom of the time, while she was being undressed. Louis's diplomatic business was of course extensive and of the utmost importance, and every day shoals of dispatches to his representatives were sent off, many of them written at his dictation and some even written by his own hand. In diplomacy each of Louis's successive schemes ran a curious parallel to his whole reign. They opened with apparently dazzling success, gradually collapsed until the struggle to make both ends meet seemed too

difficult to contemplate, and finally emerged to halting success by the aid of circumstances practically unforeseen. It was largely through Louis's unfailing diligence that each of his Dutch wars opened with all the rest of Europe neutral or actually allied to him, and in the matter of the Spanish Succession his diplomatic tact and sheer hard work seemed at first to have won a clear path for him, but in every case enemies gradually rose up against him until the opposition for a time was overwhelming. The explanation seems to be that Louis could predict accurately what professional diplomatists and their autocratic masters would think about things, and he could take steps to satisfy them, but he could never allow for public opinion or for the operation of natural laws. Public opinion meant to him, if it meant anything at all, either the fashionable doctrine of an inner circle of nobility or the turbulent whim of the *canaille*. He made no allowance for public opinion himself, and, situated as he was, he never had to. He could not appreciate the growing trend of public feeling which turned James II from his triple throne; he could not foresee the effect his recognition of the Pretender as James III would have on the English people; he could not realize that the menace of his intolerant power would force Europe in the course of time to coalesce in opposition to his successive schemes of aggrandizement. All this, of course, must be largely attributed to the poisonous system which cut him off from personal contact with all save flatterers—there are several stories which go to prove that his over-anxious courtiers actually took it upon themselves to suppress articles appearing in the Press of hostile countries which might hurt his feelings, even though it was clearly of vital importance that he should be acquainted with the progress of hostile opinion.

There must be added to his handicap the fact that Louis was not a good judge of the military side of the situation. A king who goes forth to conquer by the sword ought to know what the sword can do. Victor Emmanuel succeeded in uniting Italy largely because of his military judgment, which foresaw the successive victories of France over Austria, of Prussia over Austria, and of Prussia over France, and which never left him on the beaten side. Louis was not so clever. He backed James II against William III, Tallard against Marlborough, the Swedes against the Prussians, and finally France against the world. Not one of Louis's wars was forced upon him; he was not even inveigled into hostilities as was Napoleon III in 1870. Every time he made war he made it after an opportunity to weigh the chances of success and failure, and although he often gained a substantial portion of his objective he had in each case to forgo a great part of it and to pay for his gains an extortionate price in blood and treasure. His repeated failures never taught him wisdom or gave him any sounder sense of military possibilities—though he never failed as badly in this respect as did Napoleon in 1812 and 1813.

As a strategist in the narrower sense he was clearly incompetent. He blundered grossly and disastrously in 1672. He failed in 1689 to make use of the superb prize of the mastery of the sea which chance had given him. He wasted months of command of the Channel—Napoleon was to labour and scheme for years in an ineffectual attempt to gain command of the Channel for thirty-six hours. That same year he ruined all France's prospects by sending his armies to the Palatinate instead of to the Low Countries. His direction of his armies throughout the War of the Spanish Succession exposed them to a whole series of

defeats at the hands of Marlborough, despite the fact these last were fettered by the imbecility of Dutch deputies and the fantastic opposition of German princelings. He was responsible for the bad strategical arrangements which sent Tourville to his defeat at La Hogue. He encouraged the vicious system of divided command, whereby generals commanding minor armies received from Versailles orders conflicting with those of their hierarchical superiors. Nevertheless, as his successive treaties of peace clearly show, if he did not know when to start he certainly knew when to stop; and it is in this last characteristic that he can lay claims to being greater than Napoleon, if it is ever admitted that Napoleon was able to stop.

Subject to all these conditional clauses, his diplomatic work was brilliant. He was a sound disciple of Mazarin and an opponent well worthy of the steel of William of Orange. He was successful time and again in seducing away the natural allies of the Dutch. Even Frederick William fell a victim to his blandishments in 1673 and wavered temporarily from the alliance with the Empire and the United Provinces, which seems to us now to have been the obvious and safest course for him to follow. Time and again the Rhenish princes allied themselves to him—an alliance of the lambs with the lion. No one can help admitting that his various Partition Treaties were sound pieces of work, promising the best returns for the smallest outlay—although whether or not he ever intended to stand by them is another matter, in which opinion is purely subject to personal prejudice. And for all his diplomatic successes Louis deserves the whole credit. Lionne and Pomponne cannot share the glory in the same way as Louvois, Condé, and Turenne can claim the lion's share of the credit of his military triumphs.

More than once the peace conferences which nominally had the responsibility for treaties merely confirmed arrangements which had been settled by personal discussion between Louis and an ambassador on the spot. His detailed dispatches to his representatives prove how closely he kept in touch with all developments. He achieved his ends over and over again, and the tools he employed were a tireless industry and a clear, if somewhat limited, mental plan of what he wanted. As a matter of fact there lies in this last sentence the germs of quite a good definition of the diplomatic mind.

His much more personal and private attributes are planned to the same scale. He was every inch a king, for what that statement is worth. Memoirists, both hostile and adoring, bear witness to the majesty of his bearing and his superb royal dignity. The weight of his personality commanded and obtained deference from the most undeferential. Backs bent instinctively in his presence. He could make a gift or administer a rebuke in exactly the right terms and with exactly the right gestures, so that the person addressed, however *gauche* he might be, could not help but make a suitable reply. He could rouse awe in the hearts of an embassy or devotion in those of his soldiers.

It has already been pointed out, however, that there are many hints to be found regarding his personal courage. Hostile pamphleteers and secret diarists tell of his care in safeguarding his person in the field. But in the opinion of the writer (put forward with due modesty) Louis was never cowardly in the physical sense. There is ample proof that he was positively reckless in his exposure of his person in his early life. If he was more careful later he had ample justification in the events which followed the death of Turenne in

the field in 1675. It can hardly be doubted that if Louis had been killed the army he was commanding would have gone to pieces in the same way. He was known to dare infection in a manner most unusual in his age—unlike Henry VIII of England, who spent much of his time on royal progresses to avoid local epidemics. However numerous were Louis's weaknesses, poltroonery was not one of them.

The same can hardly be said of moral cowardice. Again and again in the field he held back when a bolder (or conceivably a less sensitive or less imaginative) man would have struck hard. He shrank from the responsibility of directing troops in a pitched battle—it must be remembered that a pitched battle in that age of highly disciplined soldiers was bound to be a bloody business; Senef cost the lives of one-seventh of the combatants, without counting wounded. Yet what would be said of Wellington if his wonderful march to Ebro in 1813 had ended in a pitiful refusal of battle, or of Napoleon if, having brought the Grand Army to the Danube in 1805, he had allowed Mack to slip away from Ulm? These two instances would be comparable to Louis's hesitation in 1672 and at Bouchain in 1676. Yet, on the other hand, credit must be given to Louis for the courage to admit this weakness to himself, for he later gave up commanding armies in the field, and reconciled himself to being glorious only by deputy.

For his monstrous selfishness, on the other hand, there is no palliation. Besides the selfishness which built Versailles and which plunged France into the War of the Spanish Succession there was the petty selfishness which made his followers no allowance for illness or fatigue, and which nearly killed the Duchess of Burgundy by insisting on her travelling while

pregnant. He grew more and more regardless, cold-hearted, and unsympathetic as he grew older. The letters of Mme de Maintenon are full of references to her weariness and the King's lack of notice of it. The successive deaths of the great ministers who had ruined their health labouring in his service called forth no regret, and in more than one instance occasioned only a heartless comment; the death of his wife left him unmoved; when Mme de Montespan died he forbade her children and his to wear mourning for her. He grew so entirely self-centred that decency and right and wrong ceased to have any meaning for him.

The sexual immorality so commonly attributed to him was not nearly as marked as one might imagine. He lived half his life in open adultery, and from first to last he had a dozen or so of mistresses, but he never achieved the miracles of debauchery which were commonplace to his great-grandson and to his nephew Orleans. His consistency brought order even into the disorderly side of his life. He treated his wife with steadily unfaithful respect; the weaknesses of his flesh were such that after taking the momentous step of publicly acknowledging a mistress he could rarely resist the temptation of taking on another and unacknowledged one, but further than that he rarely strayed. It is highly doubtful if he ever could have competed with Metternich's boast of never having less than three mistresses at the same time, and he never kept a harem on the scale of those of his successor and of Charles II of England. It seems quite certain that for the last thirty years of his life he was consistently faithful to Mme de Maintenon, and thirty years of faithfulness, even for a man past middle age, is an undoubted achievement when he has the opportunities Louis had. There was none of the casual, meaningless

affairs of the senses such as Napoleon indulged in, and he never acquired a new mistress with as little thought as he would a new suit in the light-hearted manner of Charles II. In the matter of Marie de Mancini he showed himself capable of two grand passions—one for her and one for himself, the King, and if the latter triumphed it is at least another proof of his formal consistency. In parenthesis, it may be pointed out here that one powerful reason against his marrying Marie, and one which seemingly has never been fully stressed, was that he had already been intimate with her sister the Countess of Soissons, so that, by the law of the Church, the marriage would have been at least of doubtful legality, and Louis would certainly not imperil his dynasty by any such step, while the idea of a papal dispensation would be quite distasteful to him. In this case, in his fiery, chivalrous youth (chivalrous as far as he thought consistent with the royal dignity) he refused the half measure which Marie would have been glad enough to accord to him, and he went off and married Marie Louise of Spain, filled with a noble sense of duty done and duty doing. Besides, it would not accord with the new Queen's dignity (and therefore with the King's) if she were to wed some one who already had an acknowledged mistress. It was only when Louis had to choose between being ludicrous or allowing his adultery to become an affair of state that, unwillingly, he fell in with the second alternative. A great number of kings boggled at neither.

And for all his little affairs there are excuses. Olympe de Mancini was experienced and he was young. Marie Louise was dull and self-satisfied, while Louise de la Vallière was ardent and loving ; Mme de Montespan was the most brilliant and captivating woman in

all France—and she was also a shrew from whom it was only natural that he should take refuge in the arms of Mlle de Fontanges. Louis's life was far more moral than those of three-quarters of the people about the court, although it is doubtful if he was ever introspective enough to stand, like Warren Hastings, astounded at his own moderation. In France the tradition of royal mistresses was far kindlier than that in England. Fair Rosamund and Alice Perrers and Jane Shore were not remembered with the sympathy accorded to Gabrielle d'Estrees and Agnes Sorel. Although the tradition had fallen somewhat into oblivion during the reign of Louis XIII, it still seemed as if the royal dignity would be supplemented by the assumption of a mistress or two; and slight as this argument may seem to us, due allowance must be made for the fact that anything of the sort would work powerfully on Louis, who had the royal dignity so closely to heart. And when all is said and done, it must be admitted that Louis's taste in women was refined though catholic.

The same cannot be said about the pleasures of the table. Louis was a hearty eater and a gross one. The second Duchess of Orleans (the Palatine) described in an oft quoted passage how she had seen Louis eat at supper four platefuls of soup, a pheasant *and* a partridge, ham, hashed mutton, salad, pastry, sweets, and fruit. The meal is as astonishing in kind as it is in amount. It is hard to believe that a man who would begin his supper with four helpings of soup minded very much what he ate as long as there was enough of it. Add to this the fact that his supper-hour was at ten-fifteen; and it can be readily understood that Louis must have had a magnificent constitution to have survived to the age of seventy-six. His enormous

appetite worried his doctors terribly—we have an amusing account of how his principal physician, standing by at the ceremonial supper, spent his time grimacing with anxiety at each successive helping, without, of course, daring to make any audible protest. It was an age of vast eating, however, and there is nothing really extraordinary about Louis's appetite in consequence. The destiny which gave him his magnificent presence preserved him all his life from the indignity of corpulence.

It was also an age of heavy drinking, but in this case Louis displayed a moderation which is quite laudable. Many observers point out that he was never known to drink unmixed wine. For fifty years of his life his usual drink—his invariable one, in fact—was champagne and water. In those days, of course, champagne was a still wine, but even making allowance for that fact it still strikes the modern mind as fantastic that Louis should, at eight o'clock in the morning break his fast on bread and champagne and water. In the 'nineties the doctors induced him to change over to Burgundy, of a vintage so old that the colour had faded, and, according to Saint Simon, all its essential virtues with it. That is a little difficult to understand; but, for all that, one can gradually call up a picture of the septuagenarian monarch sitting in the shuddering cold and the inhuman splendour of Versailles washing down Brobdingnagian meals with an uninspiring mixture of thin Burgundy-and-water. It is almost unnecessary to add that Louis was never known to be drunk. We might feel more affection for him if he were; but the pinnacle of etiquette was never to be viewed from such an undignified angle. Besides, what would happen to the *coucher*, that masterpiece of ceremonial, if its prop and centre were

not sober? But what a picture was lost to the world in consequence! It is very easy to imagine Saint Simon's dignified and malicious wording of a description of a reeling Louis singing two songs at once, being helped out of his shirt by the princely chamberlains in the presence of his three hundred rigid-featured courtiers. It is hardly surprising that Louis took care that there was never an opportunity for the passage to be written, although it would be a gross libel ever to hint that this was the sole or the most important motive for his sobriety.

But to leave such trivialities and to try to come to general conclusions, it seems necessary to decide that Louis was a man with too much care for himself, and, so, too little for others; with a passion for order which circumstances arising from his weaknesses prevented him from indulging to the full; of other likes and dislikes too moderate to be interesting; a very ordinary man in most respects, but above the average in diligence, industry, and in conscientiousness when he thought he ought to be conscientious. He was partial to flattery, though so dulled was his palate by it that it called for something fantastically spiced in the way of panegyric to move him. He was as good to his wife as she seemed to think he ought to be, and as good to his other women as he could be in accordance with his own whim and dignity. He was at his best as a king in court, a fair diplomat, a bad general, and a hopeless financier. He was a determined enemy and a good friend—this last in despite of his betrayal of the Sicilian insurgents in 1678. His reign bulks so large in the history of the world mainly because it occupies so large a part of it. He set several fashions which did no good, and he left a tradition which did harm. Yet, for all that, one cannot help liking him in an underhand sort of fashion.

CHAPTER XIII

MAINTENON

FROM Martinique to France there came, in successive centuries, two women, both of them destined to pass part of their lives in prison, to wed men of minor distinction, to endure a poverty-stricken widowhood, and finally to marry one of the two most celebrated rulers of France. The similarity between the careers of Josephine and of Mme de Maintenon is only equalled by the dissimilarity of their characters.

Françoise d'Aubigné was early introduced to the most unpleasant possibilities of the world. She was born in prison—at Niort, where her Huguenot parents were lodged as a result of the endemic agitation against Richelieu. This was in 1635, three years before the birth of Louis XIV. While still an infant she was taken to Martinique, where she spent some poverty-ridden years. Later she returned to France, and an aristocratic aunt paid for the education of the fatherless girl on condition of her adopting the Catholic faith. The same aunt exacted a good deal of semi-menial labour in exchange for a moderate amount of the necessaries of life. Finally, at the age of seventeen she was brought to Paris and married to Paul Scarron, the author.

It was the kind of situation one encounters fairly frequently in fiction, but which is not usual in ordinary life. Scarron, as a young man, had spent some time in Rome, and both in Rome and elsewhere he had indulged in the most unbridled debauchery. Most likely as a result of this he was now, at the age of

forty-one, a crippled, shrunken invalid who knew a great deal too much and who was, as might be expected, not too full of the milk of human kindness. As an author he ranks low down in the second class; his work was critical rather than creative, and that part of it which emerges best from the past is burlesque—the result of his irritation against the highfalutin romances of the day. But Scarron enjoyed a wide personal popularity; even in his day his books were not the foundation of his fame. His conversational powers were brilliant, and men and women vied with each other for the pleasure of hearing his rapier-like jests and his startling repartees. His comical snub nose and alert expression were to be seen wherever wealth endeavoured to entertain. He lived in fair comfort on a pension from the Queen-Mother, Anne of Austria.

Just why the girl of seventeen and the reprobate of forty-one were united in unholy matrimony, and, how much they were to each other, is not easy to decide, more especially because in later years the sources of information were dried up sharply. Françoise was a beauty in a proud, cold way. Seventeen years of dependence on others gave her the tact and finesse which similar experiences later gave to Mme de Beauharnais. She had brains which she went to some trouble to employ, and it appears that she was witty enough even to please Scarron. He must have decided that she would be a useful ally, for he consented to marry her without a dowry.

Here and there in her letters we find hints of other motives—no more than hints, and it is a perilous business trying to read between the lines of such a woman's letters. Scarron was a foul-minded cripple with a vile past. His wife declares repeatedly that

she was only his wife in name—although she is reported once to have said, ‘It is hard to say how far husbands have a right to command. For them you must submit to the nearly impossible.’ There is no need to press the discussion further.

There are many mentions made of the dignity and correctness of her public behaviour. She kept the fasts of the Church with unostentatious rigidity ; her scintillating wit did not pass the bonds of decorum ; she appeared to be modest and of a quite unusual restraint. That is according to some authorities. Others point to the fact that as Scarron’s wife she mingled on intimate terms with a large number of people whose lives were of unusual irregularity. Ninon de l’Enclos—the adorable Ninon—was a close friend of hers. They spent much time together, and it was said that it was from Ninon that Mme Scarron learnt the greater part of those graces which distinguished her. And further, Ninon is credibly reported to have thrown more than one hint against Mme Scarron’s virtue, while the man whose name Ninon coupled with hers (a notorious libertine) is known to have been passionately in love with her for an appreciable period.

But virtuous or not, Mme Scarron spent over eight years of married life mingling with a great many people of the highest possible station, growing more and more celebrated for her beauty and her wit, acquiring a reputation for piety and for good works, and making many friends—one of them was a certain M. de Vivonne. Scarron died in 1660, and his pension came to an end. He had nothing of any value to leave her. Françoise found herself entered upon her second period of tribulation. She was almost penniless and she was nearing thirty. She did not do as Josephine was to do at the same age ; rather, she seemed to

welcome the opportunity of living a more retired life. Some kind friend procured her free lodgings in a convent ; other friends gave her cast-off clothes ; she managed to struggle along for a year or two, keeping in touch with all her fashionable acquaintances while leading a correct and religious life. When at last her petitions and her friends' urgings induced the Queen-Mother to continue Scarron's pension to his widow, and even to increase it, she moved to a more fashionable convent and continued to make a fair figure in Society. The fact that she did not remarry seems to point, if it points at all, to her having led a virtuous life both before and during her widowhood. She was a kind of minor miracle ; something unique but not very important ; she was some one whom every one knew—slightly. With Ninon de l'Enclos she remained fast friends, which is perhaps the most powerful argument against her virtue. She seemed to be simultaneously on the two diametrically opposite margins of shabby gentility.

Her enemies hint that she tried to make return for the free meals she received at the houses of her friends, that she was always willing to run errands, or supervise the work of servants, and perform similar minor duties. It is very possibly true ; certainly it was nothing to be ashamed of. In any case, she seems to have come through these years in a fair amount of comfort, happy in the exercise of her religion and in her intimate mingling with Society.

That society was indeed of the highest rank. During her husband's lifetime she had often met M. de Vivonne, heir apparent to the headship of the house of Mortemart, and even occasionally his sister, the Marquise de Montespan, and her husband. After Scarron's death her intimacy with Mme de Montespan

(who was just ascending into royal favour) increased considerably. Possibly the Marquise grew fond of her ; possibly even she was impressed by her intellectual gifts. One day a great lady of the Court, Mme d'Heudicourt, came to call on the Widow Scarron, with a curious and confidential offer. It appeared that Mme d'Heudicourt had been entrusted by the King with the mission of finding a governess for a very young child. The governess must be virtuous, strictly religious, clever, polished, reliable and—not given to talk about the affairs of her employers. Would the Widow Scarron care to assume entire responsibility for the welfare of this child, for its moral and physical upbringing, in consideration of a salary of two thousand *écus* per annum ?

Mme Scarron held a profound inward debate with herself upon the subject. No mention had been made as to the parentage of the child, but no one as intimate as herself with court circles could be in doubt on the subject. The little girl in question must be the offspring of a double adultery, the child of Louis the King and of Mme de Montespan. By accepting the position offered, and by assisting the maintenance of secrecy, she would be conniving at sin, making herself an accomplice and an accessory. On the other hand, her stout conservative sense of loyalty urged her to obey the authority of the supreme head of the State. Moreover, would she not be performing a good work by supervising the education of one who, if God spared her, would certainly become one of the greatest ladies in the land ? Such a child must at all cost be brought up in the ways of the Church. And the salary was quite tempting, and—the position would be one which would bring her into close contact with the King and would certainly carry great influence and possible



THE MARQUISE DE MAINTENON
From the Engraving by N. H. Jacob

patronage. A little in doubt after all her consideration she consulted her father confessor, and this latter (who doubtless appreciated the advantage of having a good Catholic at the King's elbow) unhesitatingly advised her to accept the position and managed to soothe her qualms about conniving at adultery. So the Widow Scarron with suitable reluctance made it known through the right channel that she was willing, solely on account of her loyalty to the King, to become the governess of his illegitimate child.

Soon there was more than one child. The first little girl died at a tender age, but she was followed by others, the future Duc du Maine, Comte de Toulouse, Mlle de Blois, and the rest. The Widow Scarron's life became fully occupied, for the children were put out to nurse at various houses, and she had to travel with the utmost secrecy from house to house, seeing that they were properly looked after, nursing them when they were sick, going over their wardrobes, beginning their first tentative lessons, and at the same time endeavouring both from choice and from necessity to keep up her usual appearances in society.

In the end she had to give up these last for a time. The children were brought together under one roof, where Mme Scarron took up her abode, and where she was frequently visited both by the King and by Mme de Montespan, but by few others, for the pretence of secrecy was still maintained. In recompense for this deprivation her salary was trebled, and a little later a royal grant enabled her to purchase the estate of Maintenon, while the King created her marquise—a rank suitable to the governess of his children. She had earned every penny of this reward, for without doubt her life as governess was terribly hard. Mme de Montespan, with her furious temper and insolent

bearing, was a severe mistress, and time after time she was unbearably rude to the unfortunate widow.

There came a time, indeed, after the estate of Maintenon had been purchased and its marquise had been assured a comfortable old age, when she felt she could no longer endure the responsibilities of her office and the furious rages of Mme de Montespan. She began to consider resignation—but she did not resign. Louis, who had suffered long under the lash of Montespan's uncontrollable tongue, did his best to soften her lot, and by personal rebuke he contrived to make Montespan behave in a little more civilized fashion. Yet that was by no means the only reason why Mme de Maintenon remained in office. The religious party at court had come to see in her a valuable ally, and all the influence of father confessors was brought to bear on her to remain at the King's side. Already she had assisted in the little plot to separate Louis from Montespan which failed so ignominiously on Louis's return from Flanders. She herself, sincerely and altruistically, was desperately anxious for the salvation of Louis's soul. She wanted to end his life of sin and to divert his energies towards the execution of good works, and she began to see that with good luck she could acquire influence over him.

The King's visits to her, ostensibly to note the progress of his children, were growing more frequent and more prolonged. She had all the brilliance and good sense in which the Queen was so sadly lacking, and at the same time her trained placidity and tact came as a welcome relief after Montespan's appalling ill-temper. He began to find a growing enjoyment in the company of Mme de Maintenon, and her unfailing good sense was leading him to give her the endearing

pet-name of 'Sa Solidité'. Her comments were apt and illuminating, and she never (as far as Louis could see) tried to take advantage of her position and bring influence to bear upon him. Her moderation in money matters was an incredible contrast with Montespan's insatiable lust for trinkets and patronage. It was inevitable that sooner or later he should offer her a share in the favours he divided between the Queen, Mme de Montespan, and Mlle de Fontanges—and it was equally inevitable that she should refuse.

That in itself was a proof at once of her virtue, her piety, and her disinterestedness. Louis was in no way accustomed to such refusals. Had he been a younger man, or had Mme de Maintenon been less tantalizingly desirable, he might have flung away, and she would have lost all. But Mlle de Fontanges died, and Mme de Montespan continued furiously arrogant, and he could only find peace in Mme de Maintenon's boudoir; and, verging now on forty, he found himself anxious for peace. Mme de Maintenon had no scruples about becoming a kind of platonic mistress; she was not at all unwilling to win Louis's affection from Mme de Montespan (and from his wife, if he had any for her) as long as she did not grant him any unplatonic favours. She loved him because he was the King, she was quite fond of him personally, she wanted to save his soul, and, beyond all these and considerably vaguer was the desire (due largely to the solicitations of her spiritual advisers) to induce him to show still more favour to the Catholic Church.

It has already been pointed out that Louis's harsh treatment of the Reformed Church cannot be attributed wholly to the influence of Mme de Maintenon. Before ever he made her acquaintance he was gradually becoming more and more severe towards Huguenots.

Profession of the reformed faith was becoming an insuperable bar to promotion in the State service. Various coercive measures were already in hand for insuring conversions. Legal sleight-of-hand was whittling away the privileges and safeguards enjoyed by the Huguenots under the terms of the Edict of Nantes. Louis's overgrown sense of his own dignity could not endure the thought of some of his subjects selecting a religion different from his own, and considering their chances of salvation greater than his. Besides, he liked order, and his intelligence was such that he confounded order and uniformity. The memories of his youth and the traditions of the religious wars led him to believe that the Huguenots were still a menace to the solidity of the State.

Mme de Maintenon brought to the aid of these motives the new one of genuine bigotry. There can be no doubt that she stimulated in Louis a real religious fervour, and it can be understood, when Louis's limited education and natural talents are borne in mind, how likely Louis was to turn to persecution and strong measures as inducements to conversion. One more factor, in addition, played its part. Louvois, the minister of war, had kept his place in the royal favour partly by playing on the King's weakness for military pageantry and glory, and partly by assiduous attentions to Mme de Montespan. He was clever enough to foresee Mme de Maintenon's coming success, and he set himself to make himself as favoured by the new charmer as by the old. There was one sure road to Mme de Maintenon's favour, and that was the profession of religious fervour and of zeal for conversion. There was no one, apparently, as anxious to suppress Huguenots as Louvois. Matters proceeded to such a length that in the end the State direction

of the business of Huguenot-conversion was put in the hands of the ministry of war, with the result that a ministerial order relieved new converts of the burden of having troops billeted upon them, and, by implication, saw to it that the French army was let loose upon the homes of the wretched Protestants. Ministerial hints reached the lower ranks from very exalted quarters indeed, to the effect that no serious inquiry would be made into the behaviour of troops billeted upon Huguenots, and that sort of hint is always promptly acted upon. Converts were made in thousands, and Louvois basked in the smiles of both the King and the marquise. Thousands of other Huguenots left the country; a few revolted and perished on the gallows, and even these methods of disposing of dissenters were considered quite desirable.

Before religious matters reached a crisis, Mme de Montespan had fallen from her high estate. She still remained about the court, a shadow of her former self, tortured both by memories of her old power and by fears of the royal wrath to come. For her life's sake she tried to win the favour of Mme de Maintenon, and where once she had bullied and insulted she now flattered and caressed. Mme de Maintenon received her attentions unmoved. She found them neither gratifying nor embarrassing. She went serenely on her way towards the certain triumph she saw approaching. With Montespan gone, Louis had taken his poor old queen back into favour, so that the latter was charmed to find her royal husband seeking more solace than usual in her society and her bed. Mme de Maintenon herself was exceedingly pleased at this exceptional achievement; she was sure that she would be credited after death with many good marks for this late flowering of a union blessed by the Church.

And then came the event for which Montespan had prayed so vainly a few years before. Marie Thérèse sickened and died, faded out of life as unremarkably as she had passed through it. She had made no opportunity for herself to make a mark in the world, and providence had granted her none either. She had done nothing to enlarge the very considerable niche in the history of the world which her marriage and her ancestry had originally built for her.

The diplomats of Europe looked anxiously for her successor. Louis at fifty was the most eligible man in the world. If a suitable princess could be found for him his marriage might remake the map of Europe. A well-drawn marriage contract might win him additional territory, and might well upset the balance of European power. One or two tentative suggestions were made, but they were so severely frowned upon that the eager matchmakers drew back abashed and wondering. Rumours were rapidly spreading, but their purport was so utterly unbelievable that at first they received no credence. No one could believe that Louis, the greatest nobleman in the world, was about to contract a *mésalliance* which would expose him to the taunts and jeers of all his enemies.

More than once Louis had made advances to Mme de Maintenon. He was athirst for her placid beauty and her serene temper. Her personality, narrow and rather stunted though it was, had an irresistible lure for his ageing and weary nature. She had made a place for herself in his councils and his habits, and it was hardly to be expected in one of Louis's mentality that he should not desire to enlarge it. Equally it was hardly to be expected that she should fall in with his views. She had acquired the moderate competence she desired, and even if she had not she would not.

have contemplated for a moment purchasing it by a lapse from virtue. High position was not very attractive to her, and the thought of sin was horrible. Louis was moderately attractive to her personality, but her desires were ever lukewarm.

When the Queen died, however, and marriage became a possibility, the situation was vastly altered. Even to a woman of limited ambitions a chance of becoming Queen of France must have been vastly attractive. It was only a chance, for Louis was obviously unwilling to agree to a public marriage; but still it was a chance, for she might easily induce him to change his mind. Anyway, marriage would enable her to retain her influence over him and to forward the cause of the Church and please the father confessors. Even to be the unavowed wife of the Most Christian King was a prospect sufficiently dazzling to a daughter of an extremely petty nobleman and the widow of a penniless writer of scurrilous verses. Altogether, Mme de Maintenon was not averse to a marriage.

Nor was Louis, and, granted these two conditions, the marriage was as good as made, for Louis was his own master if ever man was. For dozens of years his personal taste and inclination had been his law, and to such a length had this development proceeded that by now he could not see the urgency of any argument against anything he wanted to do. Naturally there were many arguments against this particular course of action. It is said that even Louvois risked place and position and liberty itself by making a personal appeal to the King. It was too awful to contemplate that the head of the house of Bourbon should marry Scarron's widow. It would be a union far more ill-balanced than would have been the marriage of the

widowed Queen Victoria to, say, Sir W. S. Gilbert, although such a comparison is the only way of indicating the monstrosity contemplated. Moreover, many people already credited Mme de Maintenon with being Louis's mistress—her delicate milk-and-water Platonic ideas were rather over the heads of French courtiers—and the French language teemed with proverbs of distressing bluntness regarding the undesirability of marriage with one's mistress. Such a step would make Louis the laughing-stock of Europe—and that, said everybody (to the best of their belief) was not only undesirable in itself but would be a disaster for France.

Yet the marriage was performed. Of that there is no doubt at all, although no documentary evidence survives, and there is considerable doubt as to when and where it took place, as to who were the witnesses, and as to who invoked the blessing of God upon the union. No public announcement was made, but it was soon found that royalty did not frown upon those who talked about the marriage as an accomplished fact; the marquise was installed in the special apartments on the first floor of Versailles allotted to her, next to those of Louis and of the late Queen. Her waiting women ventured, in strict privacy, to address her as 'Your Majesty', and the pamphleteers of half the States of Europe sharpened their pens in order to deal adequately with the amazing situation.

And so the wedded pair drifted into a godly, righteous, and sober old age. Maintenon never achieved her one tepid ambition of being proclaimed Queen of France, but personally it was not much of a disappointment to her. Those of her party for their own sakes tried to bring it about, but were uniformly rebuffed by Louis, whose eyes had been opened by his study of the foreign Press—expurgated though this

last was by his courtiers before reaching him. Maintenon was able to lavish much time and money upon her girls' college of St. Cyr (a place described by a contemporary as fully occupied in singing 'hosannas' in her honour), and to supply the religious atmosphere necessary to lead Louis step by step along the road of persecution.

The liberties of the Reformed Church were steadily reduced. A royal decree forbade it to use such a name; it had to call itself 'The Pretended Reformed Church'—an insult of such diabolical ingenuity as to infuriate even the long-suffering Huguenots. Finally, logically, and inevitably came the last step of all, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. It became a legal offence to profess the reformed faith, an offence subject to the severest penalties of the law. The emigration of Huguenot families, which had begun a long time ago, rose to vast heights, despite the fact that it was forbidden by the State. Altogether France lost between a quarter and half a million citizens—far more than she acquired by her wars of conquest. Open rebellion broke out in various parts of the country, and during Louis's later wars a considerable section of his army was continually occupied in hostilities with the insurgents. The navy, largely manned by Huguenots (du Quesne was of that faith), suffered an enormous decline in efficiency and numbers.

Colbert was dead: he died two years before the revocation, worn out with toil and broken-hearted over the extravagance which had ruined all his plans. He had been buried in the utmost secrecy for fear of demonstrations of joy on the part of the people, who, by the irony of fate, attributed to him all their sufferings. Had he lived his urgent representations might perhaps have held the King back from this suicidal

step—although it is much to be doubted. His sternness had prejudiced him in the eyes of Montespan, and his tolerance and the taint of heresy which hung round him made Maintenon his enemy. Perhaps it was as well that he died when he did, for the revocation fell with numbing force upon the industries he cherished ; tanneries and looms all over the country ceased work because the hands had fled over the frontiers.

All the reserve strength and wealth of France were wasted, dissipated in a breath. Treasury receipts were to dwindle, taxation was to increase throughout the rest of the reign. Even the splendid futilities of the court were to wane steadily, as money grew scarcer and casualty lists grew longer, and the King began to turn a less friendly eye upon those who were not apparently rigid churchmen. From now onward, even more than during earlier years, the vital needs for France were peace, economy, and reorganization. The expenditure on Versailles was just beginning to diminish with the approaching completion of the building ; it had consumed more French wealth than any European war of that date. It only remained to be seen whether Louis would find for France some other way of draining her life blood. By this time every one expected that he would, and every one, by way of a change, was right. The war-clouds of twenty-five years of hostilities were massing on the horizon.

CHAPTER XIV

SEA POWER

NO one had ever expected that Louis would remain quiescent, content with a peaceful development of the kingdom inherited from his father. Such an inglorious career was beyond the conception of the mind of the age. No king could be dignified or great or famous if he did not make war. It had been universally taken for granted that Louis would fight as soon as he was sure of himself, and equally it had been assumed that the object of his ambition would be the conquest of the Rhemish frontier and of the Netherlands. Indeed, so decided was public opinion in this matter that Leibnitz, the mathematician and philosopher, in the intervals of elaborating the system of the integral calculus and of that doctrine of 'sufficient reason' and 'the best of all possible worlds' (which was to excite, a generation later, Voltaire's mirth expressed in 'Candide'), addressed a long memorial to Louis pointing out to him that there was more profit and glory to be acquired by the conquest of Egypt and the East than of the Low Countries.

But Louis hardly listened to Leibnitz ; he had not the visionary power which later was to lead Napoleon across the Mediterranean. He preferred to follow in the footsteps of his immediate predecessors and conquer Lotharingia, led on by the continual vain hope that the defencelessness of his prey would render the conquest speedy and cheap. He had begun two wars in the Netherlands under this delusion, and each time he had found all Europe arrayed against him before

he could complete his conquest—perhaps by his own fault, perhaps not. Yet still he continued his aggressions.

The Peace of Nimwegen had been rather rough and ready ; a great many of its clauses were not as definite and precise as they might have been—very likely because Louis saw to it that they were left vague. Strict interpretations of these clauses on the French side made it seem as if France was entitled to a great deal more than ever the allies intended to allow her, and Louis made certain that this strict interpretation existed, for he appointed pro-French commissions to do the interpreting. Fragment after fragment of Alsace, Lorraine, and the Netherlands was declared to be given to France by the treaty, and at each decision a little wave of French troops surged across the frontier and Europe was faced with a *fait accompli*. The climax of this system occurred when Louis and Louvois made a dash for the Rhine with a secretly collected army and laid hold of Strasburg, which had been an imperial city from time immemorial. Vauban instantly fortified the citadel, and Austria, in the throes of a death-struggle with the Turks, reluctantly agreed to recognize its possession by France. There can be no doubt that at that time the citizens were wholly opposed to the annexation, and would have resisted had they dared, although they seem to have soon become resigned to their fate. The French conquest of Alsace and Lorraine took place just before the crystallization of national sentiment, with the result that language and ethnology and temporary reconquest notwithstanding, the provinces are now more French than German, and presumably will remain so—although Louis, of course, did not mind very much one way or the other.

Europe regarded French aggression with considerable disquietude. William of Orange worked night and day to raise opposition; Austria, relieved from fear of the Turks by Sobieski's march to Vienna, turned a more attentive eye to Rhenish affairs; the princelings of the Rhine were roused by Louis's avowed intention to become a candidate at the next imperial election. The climax came when Louis claimed the Palatinate for Orleans by right of his second marriage to the sister of the late Pfalzgraf. In 1686 the German powers signed the defensive League of Augsburg against Louis—and all the world knows now how ready defensive alliances are to drift into war.

On his maritime flank Louis felt tolerably secure. James II was now King of England and was both his pensioner and his sincere supporter. Charles at his death had left him with a position sufficiently secure and a standing army sufficiently large to enable him to play the part of benevolent despot in moderation. While James was King and possessed of sufficient tact to keep his people quiet there would be no war between France and England, so that French sea power could be relied upon for aid in the crushing of the Netherlands and in rendering Spain inoffensive. With the command of the sea, and the consequent cutting off of Spain both from her treasure fleets and from her Belgian and Italian provinces, Louis could rely upon meeting only insignificant opposition, for he scorned the military strength and abilities of William of Orange and of the Empire. The easy crushing of Monmouth's rebellion gave him a false idea of the security of James's seat on the throne.

And then in 1688 came the explosion—the spark which initiated it was a disagreement regarding the Electorate of Cologne. Louis set his armies in motion,

began once more the pernicious system of selling offices in order to raise money, and prepared confidently to fight all Europe with the exception of England. He could make his attack at one of two points—he could secure the Lower Palatinate or he could march once more into the Netherlands, and upon his choice depended the history of Europe.

It was at this vital juncture that Louis displayed his inability to estimate the balance and weight of popular feeling. He had already offended the Dutch, two years before, by his abolition of the tariff favouring them granted at Nimwegen (one more example of the way in which tariffs set up international friction), and he did not realize how heartily the Dutch were prepared to support William of Orange. Still less he realized how much of his initial power James had lost in the course of three years of obstinacy and folly. He could not believe that a breath of popular feeling would cast James from his throne ; the birth of an heir to James had made it certain that a continuance of his reign would result in the succession of a Catholic-trained prince. Most of England desired a revolution which would set James's Protestant daughter Mary (William's wife) on the throne, and waited in trembling hope for William to come and bring it about.

Louis was well aware of William's intentions. He knew of his concentration of troops and transports for a descent upon England. He yielded to his fears so far as to suggest to James the loan of the French fleet to aid in the repelling of William's attack. James refused. The English navy was the subject of his particular care ; he had commanded in chief in two great battles against the Dutch, and he had supervised the introduction of various very successful reforms of management and direction. James was certain of the

loyalty of the fleet, and Louis believed in his belief to such an extent that he sent his fleet south against Spain, despite the frantic appeals of his minister of marine, Seignelay (Colbert's son and successor).

But whether or not Louis kept his fleet in the Channel, there was still a sure way by which he could pin William to Holland and prevent him from attacking England. That was to lead his armies against the Netherlands—the burghers, patriotic though they were, would never consent to see William strip the land of troops while the French were at their gates. Even this Louis realized, but, blinded, he refused to act. He sent his fleet south and his armies against Germany, thereby leaving William free to spread his sails to a 'Protestant wind' and land at Torbay. Louis had expected him to be opposed by the English fleet, to have to fight, so that England would be drawn against her will into entering the war on the French side. He never foresaw that the fleet would be diplomatically kept out of William's way, that the English people would rally to him, that Marlborough and the army generally would flock to his standards, and that in a few short weeks James would be a refugee in France and William, his deadliest enemy, would be at the head of affairs in the country which could do him most harm. It was an error of judgment which he shared with James; that seems to be the strongest possible condemnation of it.

The French fleet had been built up by Colbert, which in itself is a sufficient guarantee of its usefulness. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes had struck it a severe, but in no way a mortal blow. Ship for ship, the French navy was better built and better planned than the Dutch or English navy—French superiority of design was as apparent now as it was for all the

next century. Numerically France actually had ready for service in home waters a greater fleet than England and the United Provinces could raise between them. Furthermore, it was a fighting fleet—the personnel of the French Royal Navy of this date anticipated later developments by being trained for military naval service, instead of being, as were those of the English and Dutch fleets, a hasty levy from a merchant service. Colbert had founded a naval college for the training of officers two centuries before such a thing was contemplated in England.

This, however, was symptomatic of a serious weakness. The very fact that the French navy depended for its crews upon specially trained men indicated that it had no vast reserve of merchant seamen to draw upon. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes had drained it of its trained reserve. The French navy was likely to be at its best and largest at the outbreak of war, and to dwindle steadily as war progressed, while, on the other hand, England and the United Provinces, with dozens of shipyards and a whole class of skilled shipbuilders ready for employment, and with an extensive mercantile marine from which to recruit, were likely to increase their naval strength with every month allowed them; and to this consideration must be added the further one that naval competition is an expensive pastime in which the prize is likely to go to the holder of the longest purse. England, and to a less extent Holland, were overflowing with wealth. Louis (as has already been shown) had lavished upon Versailles the equivalent of two hundred dreadnoughts nowadays. In truth the French navy was like a cut flower, beautiful to look upon but doomed to early death.

Nevertheless, as things stood at present the French

enjoyed a crushing superiority at sea, and, seeing that this superiority was likely to be seriously challenged at a later date, it was obviously Louis's best course to employ his navy to the utmost against his growing rivals. His fleet was bigger than his enemies'; his army was overwhelmingly superior. William's hold over England was none too secure. If ever Louis had a chance of world dominion it was at this moment. A mere detachment from the vast armies on the Rhine would have sufficed, if landed in England, to defeat the regular forces of the English Crown and to escort James back to Whitehall. Its ultimate military success might well be doubtful, but such a stroke would have hampered English naval development and would certainly have given Louis a prolonged command of the sea while enabling James to strengthen his grip upon Scotland and Ireland. There might certainly have arisen in the future a Divided Kingdom instead of a United one.

With a preponderance of numbers no greater and a strategical position far less advantageous the British Government in the last war succeeded in penning the German fleet in harbour while passing millions of men over the Channel, while not a single German squadron (after the Falklands) displayed its flag beyond the Baltic. In the campaign of the Nile the weaker naval power paid the penalty of trying to send an expedition overseas in face of a superior enemy by the destruction of its squadron and the capitulation of its army. Those are examples of sea power employed logically and energetically. For examples of sea power employed aimlessly and languidly one has to refer to Louis's naval direction of the campaign of 1689 to 1692.

In January 1689 James fled from England, and in April of the same year William and Mary became King

and Queen of England. In March James had already landed with a French escort in Ireland and had been received as king by the Catholic part of the country. The north remained to be subdued by him. Surely the French could have given him the troops and supplies necessary, and surely they could have prohibited the passage of English succours across the Irish Channel? There was, to be sure, a small trickle of French reinforcements to Ireland, and an English attempt to interfere with it resulted in a French victory at Bantry Bay, but Schomberg with an army was landed in Ireland as well, and Kirke relieved Derry in the nick of time. The relief of Derry was the turning point of the Irish campaign, and deserves the attention lavished upon it by Macaulay and others, but it was a relief which should never have occurred if Louis had made any reasonable use of his naval superiority. A French blockading squadron based on Irish harbours should have prevented the passage of any warlike stores or armaments from England to Ireland without a battle in which the English would have had to encounter superior numbers. Louis had not merely struck feebly at a limb when he might have struck hard at the heart but he unnecessarily gave his enemy the opportunity to parry the blow.

The following year the balance of naval power was a little less in favour of the French, although they could still boast a very considerable superiority. In June Tourville sailed from Brest with seventy ships of the line (there was still a French squadron maintained comparatively uselessly in the Mediterranean), and a few weeks later he encountered Admiral Herbert with fifty-six sail of the line off Beachy Head. Herbert fought, in obedience to orders, and was roughly handled.

He got away with difficulty, burning sixteen ships to prevent their capture, and finally took refuge in the Thames estuary. Tourville wasted the greater part of the fruits of victory by his rigid maintenance of the line of battle during the pursuit—possibly this was the result of commanding an academic navy.

But the battle of Beachy Head was of small account in history in consequence of the irresolute French strategy. The day before Tourville sailed from Brest, William sailed for Ireland from Chester. His fleet consisted of nearly three hundred transports convoyed by *six* men-of-war. If even a dozen of Tourville's fleet had intercepted him (to say nothing of the French Mediterranean squadron), or if Tourville's whole force had been there (as was perfectly possible), the history of the world might well have been different. The day after Beachy Head, William won his single victory in the field—the battle of the Boyne which brought him a triple crown.

Russell took command of the English fleet and enunciated that famous doctrine of the 'fleet in being' which was to influence naval strategy so strangely in later years. His beaten fleet lurked in the Thames, whence the buoys had been removed in order to protect him from the attack of the victorious French. He believed that the menace of this fleet 'in being', this beaten remnant, would deter the French from landing an army in England, although its communications would be guarded by Tourville's victorious squadron. Russell guessed right, and the fact has entered into naval calculations ever since. But a German fleet 'in being' no more hindered the passage of the English army in 1914 than could Russell have hindered a French army in 1690. Louis might even have learned a lesson from William's boldness, because

he had passed an army into Ireland in face of a *superior* naval power.

But no energetic use was made of French superiority. The French fleets, languidly handled, beat about the seas throughout 1690 and 1691, inflicting a little damage on the English mercantile marine and protecting the small French commerce from harm. All this time the French fleet was growing weaker from desertion, disease, and exhaustion of material—all the causes which must reduce the efficiency of a fleet starved for money and with no reserve behind it. Louis could do little for it; the immense land campaigns in progress at the same time were draining his resources. The wonderful silver furniture of Versailles went to the melting pot at this time; it even became likely that the Most Christian King would be reduced to dining off china if the war progressed much longer. If Louis were short of silver his navy would most certainly be short of gold. The numbers of the fleet dropped until Tourville's Brest squadron numbered only forty.

At the same time the numbers of the allied fleet expanded steadily. The merchants of London and Amsterdam opened their purses at the news of the battles of the Boyne and Aughrim, and when they found that Tourville's victorious fleet was making small attempt to cut off the India convoys. The gold that streamed into William's treasury built ships, and bought ships, and refitted ships, which were manned by crews drawn from enormous mercantile marines. Two years after Beachy Head, Russell found himself in command of one hundred sail of the line.

It was at this point that Louis decided upon energetic naval action. Seignelay, Colbert's son, who had been pressing continually for permission to use

the fleet as it should have been used, had just died. Louis had disliked him—perhaps it is here that the explanation is to be found both of Louis's new policy and his old. Certain it is that Seignelay would never have agreed to the orders which were sent to the wretched Tourville. Louis thought that now the time had come for an invasion of England—two, nearly three, years too late. He foresaw that now no French fleet could carry an army to the coast of England without a battle, and he tried to make preparations for that battle. The Toulon squadron was at last ordered round to Brest—in a hurry—and continual foul winds kept it back until it was too late. But there was no sound strategical reason against its having received these orders thirty months before.

Tourville received orders to sail from Brest and meet the English fleet, and in the absence of the Toulon squadron he did so with only forty-four ships of the line. At the Hogue he encountered Russell with ninety-nine. Even then he could have avoided action, but he had in his pocket a querulous letter from Louis, harping upon his continual irresolute handling of the French fleet, and in particular upbraiding him with his lack of energy in the pursuit after Beachy Head. Tourville was not the man to retreat tamely after such a reprimand—and if he had done his head might have answered for it. He took his fleet gallantly into action, fought a whole long summer's day without losing a ship, and then, his honour vindicated, endeavoured to make away. The allied ships had not been resolutely handled, as is obvious (the rule of the line of battle, and the Admiralty instructions, were beginning to exert their paralysing sway), but they clung to Tourville as closely as they could, while he was hampered by his desire to escape without losing

the *Soleil Royal*, the finest ship in the world, which had been badly crippled. As Tourville's rigid adherence to the line after Beachy Head hampered his pursuit, so did Russell's after La Hogue. But Russell maintained some sort of contact, and was still nearly within reach of the French when they came to the Race of Alderney, and endeavoured to pass it on the ebb tide. Most of the fleet got through and made a safe passage to St. Malo, but fifteen were caught by the change of the tide before they could escape. They tried to break back past Cherbourg, but every one of them went ashore and was burned either by their own crews or by the English.

Thus the French suffered as great a numerical loss at La Hogue as did the English at Beachy Head, but their relative loss was far greater. The money could not be found to replace the lost ships, nor were the crews to be found either. From La Hogue onward the mastery of the sea was definitely in the hands of the English—although it might with reason be said that even if the battle had not been fought the result would have been the same. La Hogue was a mere incident, a link in a long chain of events leading to a single end; it ranks not with the Nile or Trafalgar, but with Jutland.

For the rest of the war the French navy continued to decline. Sea power exerted its unpretentious but inexorable pressure. France was cut off from the world. Her struggling mercantile marine was swept from the sea; her infant industries were strangled before they ever enjoyed maturity. Her armies had to evacuate Catalonia because their communications were threatened by an English Mediterranean squadron. To and fro went English fleets, bearing wealth to the greatest of France's enemies, carrying armies and

munitions and subsidies. Sicily and Sardinia and the Balearic Islands were safe from the French, and contributed to the effort made against Louis. The French coasts were never safe from an English descent, and five French soldiers were bound down to coast defence for every one Englishman who could be transported by sea. It was a silent struggle, without brilliance or splendour or pageantry, but it ruined France. And for two long years Louis had it in his power to end the struggle before it began!

Want of money and the desire to employ his blockaded navy drove Louis to commence destroying, that last resource of the weaker naval power, on which France was to fall back on so many subsequent occasions, and which the German Empire was to carry to its last logical and insane development. Privateers swarmed out of French ports, evading the blockading squadrons, and played havoc with the English merchant fleets. Louis leased out French warships and French government seamen to private companies. Some of the ventures were highly remunerative—a semi-piratical expedition against Cartagena paid ninety-two per cent to its promoters. There were harsh words spoken in London about the shipping losses. But never in history has commerce destroying won a war, and Louis was much farther from success than was Germany in 1917. Little by little the raiders were hunted down and the blockade became more and more effective, until by the close of the war the losses were negligible compared with the enormous growth of trade. It was significant of the course of the war to compare the easy rates at which the English government raised money in London and Amsterdam and the fantastic devices Louis had to employ (letting out his navy to private enterprise was one of the least

fantastic) in order to find the funds to maintain his armies and his court. It was the first striking lesson on the influence of sea power since the Armada, but it hardly taught those most in need of instruction anything at all, as will become obvious later.

For Louis all sorts of excuses may be urged. He was not a professional seaman ; he was badly served by his instruments ; France had had little experience in the direction of a navy and the employment of sea power ; he did at least have command of the sea temporarily, which was more than Napoleon ever achieved. But these are not really excuses. Properly regarded, they are all items in the indictment.

CHAPTER XV

ON LAND

TO some minds it seems obvious that the decision in the War of the League of Augsburg was won on the sea, that the land operations, interesting though they might be, were purely subsidiary; and that a French occupation of Vienna in 1695 would have been no more decisive than a French occupation of Moscow in 1812. That view may be correct (the writer's own opinion may appear obvious on reading the preceding chapter), but as affording an insight in Louis's character and into his methods of government some slight notice of the war on land may be profitable.

There is a very well-known story in St. Simon which tells how in 1685 Louvois fell into an argument with Louis over a window at Versailles, and how, to make his place secure again, he precipitated the war which would make him indispensable. That may be true, but it is hardly probable. The war was inevitable in consequence of the reaction of Europe to French aggression, the friction with the United Provinces over tariff questions, the rivalry between Louis and William of Orange, and the general unpopularity of France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Where Louvois's influence told was in persuading Louis to disregard the maritime aspect of the war and to concentrate on the Rhine. Louvois was not quite so unpopular with Louis as was Seignelay, the minister of marine, and he won his point—possibly he only raised it in consequence of his rivalry with Seignelay.

The standing army which Louvois had built up with such care always ensured early successes for

France. A hundred thousand men under the command of the Dauphin poured over the frontier. The Palatinate and the Electorates of Mainz, Treves, and Cologne, the whole valley of the middle Rhine fell into French hands. The conquest was a vast relief to France, for money was wanting, and the subsidies and requisitions wrung from the Rhineland were a welcome windfall to the exhausted treasury. But the movement was eccentric and unlikely to force a decision, and within two months the army was recalled in order to reinforce the main theatre of the war in the Netherlands. It was a severe blow to the pride of Louis, whose dynastic ambitions in the Palatinate were touched, and to Louvois who had counselled the movement. Louis yielded to Louvois's advice that the whole occupied Rhineland should be devastated, that cities and crops should alike be given over to the fire, and the wretched inhabitants plundered of their last possessions. The order went forth, and was carried out. There was not nearly as much military excuse for it as there had been for Turenne's previous devastation in 1674, and the terrible reports which came in moved the Imperial Diet to instant action. War was declared by the Empire, and all the resources of Europe, now that William was King of England, were directed against France.

The campaign which now opened in the Netherlands was carried on in the snail-like fashion which was bound to characterize campaigns between expensive professional armies which would not move without tents and supplies borne on seventeenth-century wagons over seventeenth-century roads. A motley array of Germans, Dutch, Spaniards, and English (the latter under Marlborough) won a success over the French at Walcourt; but the campaign largely



expended itself in marches and counter-marches, feeble threats at bakehouses and forage districts, and all the inconsequential manoeuvres of the beginnings of modern war. Yet it is hard to picture Napoleon, whatever the demands of his troops, beginning a summer in Belgium with a hundred thousand men, spending the summer there, ending the summer there, and finally going into winter quarters there supremely satisfied with himself.

The year 1690 was studded with victories for the French. Tourville won the battle of Beachy Head and made no use of it. Luxembourg won the battle of Fleurus over the Prince of Waldeck and made no use of it. Catinat won the battle of Staffarda over the Duke of Savoy and was forbidden to make use of it. Neither Louis nor Louvois liked Catinat, who was shortly after removed to another sphere of action where he would not gain undesirable victories.

By the time 1691 came round Louis was convinced that drastic action was demanded. He decided to go in person to the seat of war ; he took over the command of a hundred thousand men and moved against the enemy. But, on the frontier of France lay Mons, fortified with all the skill of the age—in sooth, a tempting bait for a king who prided himself on his siegecraft and who had an unnerving doubt as to his capacity in a pitched battle. The hundred thousand men swung round and invested Mons. Louis, with Vauban at his side, gave his orders for the breaching batteries and the approaches. Everything was done with perfect skill and nicety, and the covering army was posted so strongly that even William, with all his thirst for battles and his laurels of the Boyne, shrank from attacking it. The governor of Mons maintained his position with all the regard for the honours of seventeenth-century war natural in the sieges of the

age. When the walls were breached and an assault threatened he surrendered, as was expected of him (it was not until the sieges of Saragossa and Gerona over a hundred years later that the tradition was broken), and Louis could revel in the splendid triumph of the capture of Mons. He came back to Versailles and to the Marquise of Maintenon. His hundred thousand men had at least done something that year : they had taken a town. And Louvois, the minister of war, the organizer and originator of the new armies, the very perfect departmental head and most imperfect statesman, was dead. From now on Louis was to take charge of the war ministry, for Barbesieux's (the late minister's son's) control would be purely nominal.

Louis began the new state of affairs, in 1692, with a convulsive effort. The silver tables and orange tubs of Versailles went to the mint ; Tourville was ordered out of Brest ; he himself went back to his army to lead it to further triumphs. He carried it from the Spanish Netherlands to the Meuse, from Mons to Namur. Namur was the strongest town in Europe ; it was well garrisoned, and it was under the command of Coehorn, the engineer, whom the presumption of William dared to raise to an equality with Vauban. The siege of the strongest fortress in Europe, under Coehorn, by the finest army in Europe, under Louis and Vauban, would be a perfect work of art, a classic, something to be remembered and written about for all the generations to come. Louis could not be expected to resist the temptation ; he could hardly deprive the world of this brilliant spectacle. So the ponderous lines of circumvallation were drawn out, and the siege train came up, and the batteries were opened against curtain and bastion, and the approach trenches began their zigzag way towards the *enceinte*.

There never was such an artistic siege as this, with none of the forms necessary and unnecessary omitted, and everything done decently and in order. Compared with this, Wellington's fortnight-long sieges of Badajoz and Ciudad Rodrigo, with their unmannerly final assaults and limited equipment, were mere bungling, botched amateurisms. Coehorn held out in Namur for the dozen or so weeks expected of him, while William of Orange and England moved restlessly round trying to find a weak spot by which to effect a relief. He was balked by Luxembourg at the head of the covering army; and at the end of June Louis was able proudly to receive the keys of Namur. They were an ample recompense for four months in the field.

There still remained at least three more months of campaigning weather. Napoleon more than once brought an army to Vienna in half that time. Surely Louis could now fall upon William and deal him a crushing blow, following it up by overrunning all the Low Countries and cutting the knot which bound together his allied enemies. But Louis was surfeited with military success. The capture of Namur under William's very nose was enough to place him in the first rank of—seventeenth-century—generals. Louis was not the man to risk his glory by a pitched battle against the most dogged of all his opponents. With all his household troops he took his way back to Paris, making a magnificent progress through the country, greeted on every hand with well-merited acclamations. Luxembourg, weakened by detachments, was left tied down to a strict defensive.

William saw no necessity on his part to follow Louis's example. He struck hard and sure, surprising Luxembourg in his position at Steenkirke. But Luxembourg roused was a very different man from

Luxembourg quiescent. He held his men stubbornly together, and the solid training on which Louvois had insisted came to his aid. The infantry came steadily into action, stepping slow, dressing beautifully, and firing repeated volleys without haste or confusion. The opposing forces blasted each other to pieces as professional armies always did under rule-of-thumb handling, and in the end William fell back to Brussels, badly beaten. Luxembourg might have followed him up and kept him on the move until his army fell to pieces, but he made no such move. William was able to pull his army together and recruit it undisturbed, although he passed some anxious days before he was ready to fight again. Luxembourg had been hard hit—and it would not be well for him to gain a huge success when all that his royal master had succeeded in doing was to capture Namur. That had to be taken very seriously into account.

Steenkirke and Namur had been great French triumphs, but in the south a new figure had appeared who was striking France some terrible blows. This was the son of Olympe Mancini—that Olympe who had been one of Louis's earliest loves, and who had fled into a Belgian retirement under the scandal of the La Voisin poisonings. Her son had been contemptuously refused a commission by Louis, had received one instead from the Emperor, had made a reputation in the Turkish wars, and was now commanding an imperialist and Italian army on France's south-eastern frontier. This year Eugene of Savoy had given Catinat the slip and dashed into France, raiding as far as the Rhone, stimulating the insurgent Protestants to yet greater efforts, and laying half Dauphiny under contribution. It was to check him that those detachments were made from Luxembourg's

army which helped to paralyse the action of the army of the Meuse.

The year 1693 came round, and once more Louis announced his intention of leading the French army to victory. He appeared in the Low Countries, gathering his forces together; another fine siege, that of Liège, awaited him; so did William, with his rallied army. Louis moved hesitatingly forward—and then left the army and came back to Paris. Louis never had to give explanations of his movements or his motives, and no one dared ask him for them. So no one knows the reason of this action. The foreign Press triumphantly attributed it to personal cowardice, and from this date begins Louis's nickname of 'Roi des Revues'. Physical personal cowardice it was not—that is a quite uncommon weakness, and Louis had early shown that he did not possess it. Moral cowardice it may well have been, and in the writer's opinion it actually was. Louis had never commanded in person in a pitched battle, and he mistrusted his capacity. Nor would he imperil his dignity by commanding with Luxembourg at his elbow. He might grow flustered and depend too obviously upon him. 'The fear of being thought afraid' influenced him greatly; but Louis doubtless believed that its influence was not extravagant or excessive. Louis's personal power depended upon his always being dignified and on his always personally doing the right thing—so he thought, at least. He was not going to expose that precious dignity in the rough-and-tumble of a battle against the iron King of England.

Louis never again appeared in the field, and his retirement was accepted by the allies as a tacit recognition of their superiority. It was this conviction of approaching success which went a long way towards

holding the alliance together, and at the same time a hint of it cramped the French arms and brought them on to a strict defensive—so strict indeed that William was able to suffer another defeat, at Neerwinden, and yet keep his army together and menace the French frontier.

Clearly the tide was turning against France. Luxembourg died, worn out with toil and dissipation, and his successor, Villeroy (a relation of Louis's governor as a child) was not up to his work. Sea power was strangling France, slowly but effectively. Raids on the coast kept her in a ferment: Dieppe, Dunkirk, Calais, and Havre were all attacked with some success, although the raid on Brest was beaten off with loss—a loss long attributed by the popular voice to the treachery of Marlborough, who, indeed, profited greatly by the death of the English general, Talmash. In 1695 William regilded his reputation by the recapture of Namur, despite all Villeroy's efforts and diversions, and the war crept nearer and nearer to the French frontier.

Louis was nearly desperate. He brought guile to the aid of force, and with a great price he bought off the Duke of Savoy, restoring to him the country of his title, along with Casale at the gates of Lombardy and Pinerolo at the gates of France. Louis hoped that this breach in the ranks of his enemies would bring him victory, but he hoped in vain. England, despite the war, grew stronger every hour, thanks to her command of the sea, while Austria was making herself secure on the Danube. Despite his sacrifice of his mastery of northern Italy, despite the betrothal of his grandson to a princess of Savoy, he found the allies not at all disposed towards peace.

But Louis wanted peace. Not only was France

drained of men and of gold, but he urgently needed a breathing space. The latest reports from Madrid spoke with more urgency than usual of the approaching death of the King of Spain, and with the latter's death tremendous developments were possible, in view of which Louis needed peace with Spain and an opportunity to re-form his army and his navy. So great was Louis's desire that at last, although his armies had never been seriously defeated in the field, he allowed it to be made known to the allies that in exchange for peace he would make considerable sacrifices—sacrifices which would have been believed impossible ten years ago.

At the Peace of Ryswick, Louis yielded all his conquests (except Strasbourg) from the peace of Nimwegen; he agreed to recognize William as King of England and Anne as his successor; he promised to raise no objection to the establishment of Dutch garrisons in the fortresses of the Spanish Netherlands; and lastly he promised never to aid or abet James in any design upon the throne of England. By a second treaty he even abandoned his nominee to the Cologne electorate, and gave up his dynastic claims upon the Palatinate.

Louis yielded up Alsace and Lorraine, but that was a small sacrifice, for they were always his for the taking. The real sacrifice he made was his recognition of his hated enemy William, which must have cost him many pangs of injured pride. The blow to his prestige was enormous; his frontiers had receded and he had bowed before the will of England. Europe might now suspect that the French colossus was a colossus stuffed with clouts. There would not now be so much difficulty about raising up enemies to France, just at the time when France wanted no enemies; for

Europe was gathering her forces ready for the inevitable struggle which would ensue on the death of the King of Spain. But Louis was now able to send an ambassador to Madrid who would be able to look after French interests—even if those interests were to bring down upon France all the disasters of the War of the Spanish Succession.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SPANISH SUCCESSION

THE facts of the case have been stated times without number—notably by Macaulay in several brilliant passages. The King of Spain, Charles II, the last of the long line of Arragon, was dying, and there was no heir by right of male descent. Of the various relatives by blood on the female side, the Dauphin of France had a strong claim, the Emperor a weaker one, the Electoral Prince of Bavaria one equally good, and Louis XIV himself a very weak one. But, said the Emperor, Maria Theresa of Spain, on her marriage with Louis, had solemnly renounced for herself and her heirs all claim to the Spanish throne. So had his own daughter, through whom was transmitted the claim of the Electoral Prince, and therefore the next best claim, his own, was the only one worth attention. Louis, on the other hand, pointed out that Maria Theresa only renounced her claim in consideration of a dowry which had never been paid ; moreover, he had clearly never acquiesced in the renunciation—had not his first war, that of devolution, been fought to enforce her claims ? France, Austria, and Bavaria continued to argue the matter.

All Europe was interested in the solution of the difficulty. Spain was effete, but she ruled Milan, the Netherlands, Naples, Sicily, and Sardinia, as well as all her immense American Empire. In the vigorous hands of France or Austria she might well recover and dominate the world. Both England and the Protestant Netherlands wanted to trade with Spanish America ; if France, in particular, were allowed special privileges

there she would become a serious rival in wealth and a fierce competitor in trade elsewhere. The Spanish Mediterranean islands would give the control of the Mediterranean to their possessors if guarded by a fleet like that of France in 1690. The menace to Europe involved by a union between France and Spain or between Austria and Spain was such that other nations were bound to make an effort to prevent either.

William, as representing England and the United Provinces, succeeded in arranging with Louis that the Electoral Prince should have the bulk of the Spanish kingdom on Charles's death, while the Dauphin (Louis, in other words) would be compensated with fragments of Italy and a Pyrenean fortress or two, and the Emperor would receive Milan and Luxembourg as his price of acquiescence. But no sooner was this arranged than the Electoral Prince died, and compromise was made far more difficult. It was now a definite choice between France and Austria, despite the fact that Louis offered to transfer France's claims to the Dauphin's second son, the Duke of Anjou, while the Emperor transferred his to his second son, the Archduke Charles.

William, tireless as ever, succeeded again in obtaining Louis's consent to a second partition treaty, whereby Charles received Spain and the Indies while France received Milan (with the right to exchange this for Lorraine) and the Tuscan ports. With Milan and Tuscany out of Spanish control, Spain would be divided from Austria, and William hoped that this consideration would be sufficient to satisfy Louis.

Of course it was a vain hope. It can hardly be doubted nowadays that all Louis's negotiations and partition treaties were devices to lull William and Austria into a sense of false security. If Louis saw a chance of obtaining the Spanish kingdom for his family

he would take it, treaties notwithstanding. Torcy's memoirs (Torcy was Louis's foreign minister), which were largely relied on by early historians, say otherwise, and make solemn declaration of Louis's good faith—but Torcy's correspondence has since been published, and proved the exact opposite; and no one could set aside Torcy's official contemporary correspondence in favour of memoirs written after the event. Louis wanted Spain for his grandson, and he set about devising means to obtain what he wanted.

Even so far he had been highly successful, for the mere discussion of a partition treaty was on the part of William a tacit recognition of Louis's claims, while the fact that William pledged himself to tearing away portions of the Archduke Charles's inheritance, and to using force if necessary, naturally infuriated Austria and would tend to separate the two most influential members of the late alliance. All this, however, was a trifle compared with the vast prize Louis was set on winning.

The last nightmare years of Charles II of Spain have been often described. The poor old king was convinced he was bewitched, and dragged out the end of his life meditating upon death and listening to the exhortations of his father confessors. The news of the partition treaties naturally infuriated him, just as it did his people. If Charles wanted anything in this world (which was doubtful) it was to pass on to his successor an undivided inheritance. The Spaniards themselves wanted to maintain the monopoly of the American trade just as much as the English and Dutch wanted to share it, and naturally they eyed with suspicion any suggestion from this quarter. The whole national pride was touched by this outside interference with Spanish concerns, and at first the King reacted accordingly.

His first will left his entire dominions to the Electoral Prince, without regard for the compensations arranged by Louis, but the prince died, and the burning question now arose as to who would be newly designated Charles's successor. At first it seemed as if the Austrian party would be successful, for the Austrians disclaimed any recognition of the partition treaties, while Charles's wife was sister of the empress. What opposition there was at court to the Queen's party was also pro-Austrian. It certainly seemed as if the King would be influenced into making a will in favour of the Archduke.

It was before the death of the Electoral Prince that Louis had sent as his ambassador to Madrid the very best of all the many instruments at his disposal. This was the Marquis d'Harcourt, a brilliant diplomat at the same time as a distinguished personality, and the truth was not in him. He was wealthy, and Louis managed to scrape together sufficient funds to enable him to make a considerable sensation on his entry into the capital. He found himself snubbed by the King and Queen, ignored by the *grande*es, and treated with contumely by the court. France and the French were in the lowest depths of disfavour. D'Harcourt was undismayed ; he proceeded along a well-mapped course of prodigal expenditure, and he bought friends wherever he could find them. He was helped by the fact that Colbert's industries had firmly established in Paris the manufacture of articles of fashion, while the magnificence of Louis's court saw to it that they *were* fashionable. From Paris d'Harcourt procured all the latest innovations, sharp to the moment, and, if anything, a little 'ahead of fashion. It was a lure which the dowdy court of Madrid could not resist ; d'Harcourt's little presents of wigs and buckles and silk stockings

gradually won over the court to his side, and, with that achieved, he was able to bring all the fascination of his personality to bear upon the King and Queen. He won their friendship (the Queen was as grateful for silk stockings as were her ladies), and his brilliant, wonderful wife arrived at the psychological moment and completed his victory. The death of the Electoral Prince brought over the small Bavarian party to his side; the Princess Colonna (we met her in an earlier chapter as Marie de Mancini) decided at last to throw her influence into the scale on the side of her former lover; the Pope, when consulted, tried to be Delphic, but was clearly favourable to France; by the time Louis had signed the second partition treaty France was in high favour in Spain.

Seeing that there had been war between the two countries for nearly three-quarters of the century, and that France had robbed Spain of her fairest Burgundian and Flemish provinces, it was a remarkable achievement, for which the credit must go to Louis. He had secured from William a treaty which at the worst would give France a great deal, while at the same time he had made it likely that Spain would offer him much more.

The poor old King, anxious to keep his realm united, and therefore inclined to favour the strongest side, nagged at by his wife and by the father confessors whose favour d'Harcourt had bought, and weighed down by the advice of the Pope, eventually made a will. Ten days afterwards he died, and the will was made public. The whole of the Spanish possessions were by it left to the Duke of Anjou. Louis held the overlordship of Europe in his hand.

He knew that if he accepted the bequest for his grandson he would have to fight for it; Austria at

least would object, but he had no fears of Austria, seeing that for eight years he had fought all Europe. England did not seem inclined to move; her citizens were not desirous of plunging into another bloody and expensive war merely to decide the question as to whether a Bourbon or a Hapsburg should sit on the throne of Spain. The Dutch Estates felt much the same. The Duke of Savoy (whose daughter was promptly married to the seventeen-year-old Duke of Anjou) was in alliance with France. So was the Elector of Bavaria. Louis held every card in his hand; William of England felt too helpless to do anything to check him, hampered as he was by English and Dutch inertia.

Louis had planned for every eventuality; if the will was in his favour he would act promptly upon it; if not, he was ready to grab for everything within reach and endeavour to impose Philip upon the Spanish throne by force; should he fail, he could still bargain upon the terms of the partition treaty. He had no hesitation at all in permitting his grandson to accept the Spanish crown—the famous scene wherein, after a solemn council, he emerged leaning upon Anjou's shoulder and announced, 'It is the King of Spain', to receive the famous reply, 'Sire, there are no Pyrenees,' was all a farce as far as deliberation went.

Louis had decided to set his grandson on the throne of Spain, and so far he had played his cards brilliantly. He was definitely committing France to a war with Austria, but he could face that with equanimity. Austria could do him no serious hurt, and his wretched people could still endure a little more war. Spain would be at least divided in his favour, and Bavaria and Savoy were his allies. If only he could calm the

apprehensions of England and the Netherlands he was safe enough—and at present neither country was inclined to move. All he had to do was to use caution and moderation.

Philip was received with acclamation in Madrid, and from this point Louis proceeded to jeopardize his future by a whole series of impolitic actions. He made mistake after mistake, and he ended by drawing France and Spain into war with the rest of the world. He was to fight Europe for ten years solely that his grandson might be King of Spain. Louis considered the prize worth the cost ; no one else in France thought the same, but that did not matter to Louis.

First of all, by a solemn patent, Philip was confirmed in his presumptive right of succession to the French crown. It was a point which up to then had been left in decent obscurity. The fact that Philip was the Dauphin's second son had left a doubt as to whether the two crowns were ever to be united, and this very doubt had been a strong argument in the hands of the peace party in England. The issue of this patent, however, swept this argument away. There was a strong possibility that the crowns of France and Spain would eventually be united, for there was only one life between Philip and the direct line of succession, and Louis's bold proclamation began to raise uneasy doubts in the minds of Englishmen and Dutchmen. There seemed every likelihood that some time in the future France would be found extended along the North Sea as far as Antwerp, while Frenchmen would receive trading privileges in Spanish America. It was a threat to English security and prosperity—and the Dutch had a pointed saying to the effect that France was a good friend but an unpleasant neighbour. And Louis proceeded to rub

the lesson in with a couple of commercial edicts which seemed to foreshadow the opening of the Spanish Main to Frenchmen.

At almost the same time Louis displayed vast restlessness on his Netherland frontier. The King of Spain's Belgian viceroy was the Elector of Bavaria, who was incidentally Louis's fervent supporter against Austria. French troops appeared along the frontier, and moved into the province on the ostensible plea of strengthening the feeble Spanish garrisons. But the French were in overwhelming force, and moved threateningly upon the places held, in accordance with the Treaty of Ryswick, by Dutch garrisons. These last withdrew hastily, lest worse befall, and the towns were promptly occupied and put into a state of defence by French troops. All the important Netherland towns were now in Louis's hands, and when it is remembered that Mons and Namur were the sole prizes of two successive campaigns during the last war it will be realized that Louis had taken a long stride forward.

English and Dutch uneasiness instantly became more marked, and William was able to sign a secret treaty of alliance with the Emperor, pledging the support of these two countries in a war against France. But William had to contend in Holland, and, much more especially in England, with a factious and determined opposition, which, partly in all sincerity and partly out of sheer malicious desire to thwart him, was bent on keeping peace with France, and refused to see any hint of danger in Louis's steady consolidation of power: Louis still had a chance of keeping his enemies divided.

Then, in the same month as the signature of the Grand Alliance, James II of England died at his

palace at St. Germain. Louis visited him on his death-bed, and, moved to a rash pity, promised to do all he could for James's young son. He kept his promise, and by doing so satisfied much of his dynastic yearning. He proclaimed the Old Pretender as James III, King of England and of the Scots, and thereby he violated his Treaty of Ryswick, mortally offended England, and imperilled his own throne and his grandson's.

It was a last and fatal blunder. A new election, well managed on William's part, gave him the parliamentary majority he needed. England and the United Provinces ratified the treaty of the Grand Alliance. The promise of English gold brought over allies from the wavering lesser States of Europe. France heard with dismay that Denmark, Prussia, and the imperial confederacy were joined with England and Austria and the United Provinces in a league whose avowed object was to set a Hapsburg on the Spanish throne and to crush France into utter helplessness; already Prince Eugene had cleared the quadrilateral by his victory at Chiari.

Louis was not so dismayed. During the War of the League of Augsburg he had fought the same combination single-handed, although they were helped by Spain and Savoy, who were now his allies, and he had not been distressingly unsuccessful. He counted on Spanish gold to help out his disordered finances, and he had his grip on the Spanish Netherlands in a fashion always before denied him. He saw no reason why he should not be victorious, and in this case his European supremacy would be undeniable. The death of William of Orange, as the campaign of 1702 was about to open, removed his most determined enemy, and, he thought, made it possible to divide England from the

Netherlands. He could hardly be expected to know yet that William's death would clear the way for the most successful of all Louis's opponents, the greatest general of his age and the most dangerous enemy France could possibly have. In war, as Napoleon said, it is not so much men who count as a man ; to Marlborough and Eugene, France could only oppose (perhaps it was Louis's fault) second-rate or even third-rate men—Villars, Tallard, and the rest. And sea power—that sea power of which Louis recked so little—would be draining France's life blood as long as the war continued.

Even among Louis's own subjects there were many who doubted France's capacity to support the strain of hostilities against such odds. The French army, since the death of Louvois, had suffered a serious decline, partly to be attributed to the constant want of money under which it laboured, but mainly due to the cessation of Louvois's painstaking supervision. The sale of commissions had raised children to important commands ; the iron discipline upon which Louvois had insisted had begun to lapse as soon as its subsidiary factors—good food and good treatment—had disappeared. Truth to tell, the fervour with which the troops regarded their King had begun to diminish ; even to the man in the ranks Louis was not as great a soldier as Luxembourg and Catinat, while Tallard, and Marsin, and Villeroy were unable to rouse any enthusiasm whatever. At Friedlingen in 1702 there was a wild panic among the French infantry which might have had serious results had not the French horse charged bravely and their German opponents been mishandled ; panics do not occur even occasionally among disciplined troops.

Sea power early made itself felt. The English army

was transported safely to the Low Countries, where Marlborough could set about his heart-breaking task of persuading his unruly allies to submit to his guidance. An English squadron made a bungling attack on Cadiz—unsuccessful, but sufficient to send a thrill of alarm through Spain—and then caught and captured the whole of the Spanish treasure fleet in Vigo Bay. The gold on which Louis and Philip had counted was borne in triumph to London and went to subsidize France's enemies. More than that, sea power brought Portugal nearer to England than she was to Spain, and a well-timed commercial treaty and a well-backed threat or two brought Portugal into the ranks of the allies, so that England found the naval base she needed in Lisbon, and Philip's Spanish dominion could be threatened at its heart. Rooke passed on into the Mediterranean, seeking to strike another blow. Barcelona defied him at present, the Toulon fleet stayed in harbour, but eventually he dashed upon Gibraltar and seized it, thereby giving England the Mediterranean base she needed. The Count of Toulouse (Louis's son by Mme de Montespan) came out with the French fleet, and fought a bloody and indecisive battle off Malaga. Losses were about equal, but those of the French were irreparable, and no French fleet was able to challenge an action for all the rest of the war, while English squadrons went back and forth unharmed.

At the same time Marlborough was making the Protestant Netherlands safe against French attack; during the campaigns of 1702 and 1703 he took Ruremonde and Liège, Bonn and Limburg, while the check suffered by the Dutch before Antwerp taught them the need for combined action and cautious preparation. Yet even as Marlborough was getting his unwieldy army of Dutch, English, and mercenaries

into fighting order it seemed as if Louis was about to deal a crushing blow in another quarter. French and Bavarian armies had thrust forward to the Danube and had won two great victories over the Imperialists. A Napoleon would have been in Vienna that autumn, but the French generals saw fit to postpone this final triumph to the next year. But that next year Marlborough succeeded in evading the demands of the Dutch and in transferring his English and German troops to the Danube by his historic march from Maestricht to Donauwerth. With his courage in both hands he accepted the fearful losses which were the price of his storming of the Schellenberg, and, united with Eugene, he fell like a thunderbolt upon the French army at Blenheim. It is an old story now how Lord Cutts, 'the Salamander', led the English regiments—stepping slow, dressing superbly—upon the village of Blenheim, and how he was repulsed with dreadful loss, amply repaid by the consequent excessive concentration of the French strength on that wing. Then Marlborough brought up the rest of his army—Danes and Hanoverians and Hessians and Wirtembergers and all the rest of the motley host—and after some anxious hours shattered the French centre, captured Tallard and all the French right wing, and sent the rest of his enemies in hurried disorder from the field. That evening, when Marlborough wrote to his 'dearest soul' on the back of a tavern bill some forty words briefly announcing a victory, the Sun in Splendour sank in a bloody sunset.

The light of France was extinguished. Reverses in the field she had known, but none of them decisive or important. She had lost little battles sometimes in the last sixty years—tiny affairs in Italy or on the Rhine—but not once had her main army ever been

driven in rout from a stricken field. Great victories had grown uncommon—professional armies and a cautious higher command had reduced the spoils of victory to the barren possession of the field of battle. All the recent triumphs of which France boasted, and for which 'Te Deum' had so often been sung in Notre Dame; Steenkirke, Neerwinden, Speyer, had been mere unimportant examples of successful tactics. The art of victory seemed to have died with Condé and Turenne. And now Marlborough had appeared. He had not merely won a battle, but he had overthrown an army—smashed it, shattered it, wrecked it. And this army which he had shattered was the main army of France, the spear-head which was striking at the heart of Austria. Its approaching triumph had been foretold all over the French world; it had been predicted time and again that Tallard and the Elector would enter Vienna in triumph, finishing the war at a blow and setting the heel of France upon the neck of a prostrate Europe. Now the army was in tatters, Tallard was a prisoner, the Elector a dispossessed fugitive. France had been struck down in the hour of her hope and of her pride. For moral effect Blenheim surpasses Waterloo, for recently, before Waterloo, France and Napoleon had often known stunning disaster. Blenheim was a thunderbolt from a radiant sky.

But if the overlordship of Europe was lost to France she would still fight hard for honour, and harder still for life. Savoy had deserted her. Austria bought the alliance of the duke just as France had done a few years before. The Huguenot remnants in the Cevennes had lighted a flame of rebellion which, it seemed, would not be put out even by the torrents of blood made to flow by the swarms of dragoons sent .

there. The allies were marching on Madrid from Valencia and Portugal. A consummate effort was needed if France were to emerge from the struggle at all; and efforts came hard to a country drained already of wealth and strength.

To Louis's credit be it said that he never flinched—that he never even thought of flinching. Villars, the best of the second-rate generals with which France teemed, was sent to the Cevennes, and the rebellion was put down by fire and sword, by an agreement intended to be broken, by pitiless severity, and by villainous bad faith. Villars could move back to the Rhine just as Marlborough appeared there, and Villars's watchful caution was able to hold Marlborough back, thanks to the shilly-shallying of Louis of Baden and the hopeless lack of cordiality of the Imperialists and the Dutch. Marlborough chafed and fumed. He sped to Vienna, the Hague, London, doing three men's work in a desperate effort to concentrate the strength of the shambling coalition. Only in Italy was 1705 a year of triumph for the allies; there the genius of Prince Eugene and sea power between them cleared all Italy of the French; the Austrians were established in Milan, and Naples and Sicily fell, just as they did a century later, into the hands of the powers which controlled the sea. Sea power even wrung a grudging recognition of Charles III from the Pope.

Louis gathered his resources. Money was scraped together somehow—did Louis ever regret building Versailles? it is hard to find proof—by the sale of patents of nobility, by crushing taxation, by the creation of new offices, and by an eventually costly experiment with a debased currency of forced circulation unaccepted by the government. Sixty thousand men were massed in the active army of the Netherlands,

ear-marked for offensive movements against the Dutch, but in an evil hour Louis sent as their general Villeroy, the man who had been beaten at Chiari and captured in his shirt at Cremona. Upon him, as soon as the summer of 1706 opened, fell Marlborough with his new-welded army. Villeroy blundered helplessly ; and at Ramillies, Marlborough flashed out a lightning stroke of tactics and dashed the French army into ruins. The Maison du Roi—Mousquetaires Gris, Mousquetaires Noirs, and the rest—charging to redeem the glory lost at Blenheim foamed themselves into fragments against the attack led by Marlborough himself. The Regiment du Roi, once the pride of Colonel Martinet, was cut off by Lumley's English cavalry and forced to surrender. Fifteen thousand casualties—a quarter of the army—were lost to the French.

But it was not the loss of an army merely. Marlborough alone in his age, knew how to profit by victory. All Belgium was lost to France save for a few fortresses. Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp, Ostend, opened their gates to Marlborough and accepted Charles of Austria as their overlord. By the time the year 1706 was spent only a barrier of fortresses and a few new levies were left to oppose Marlborough's advance. In Spain the allies held Madrid and Philip was a fugitive from his capital. It seemed as if the next year would see the war end in the utter humiliation of France.

Yet once again Louis showed a bold front. He raised troops, he found money, he worked like a slave to form new armies. He brought his most practised weapon, diplomacy, into play. He sought vigorously to bring disagreements between the allies, and he nearly succeeded both with the Dutch and with the

English. A dexterous concession brought about the neutralization of Italy and set free much-needed troops for the north-eastern frontier. Yet not all his exertions might have saved Louis had not good fortune come to his aid.

In Spain, Philip displayed energy and a dexterity very unusual in him, which kept Castile faithful to him. Berwick (James II's son by Marlborough's sister) brought all his steady talent to his help, and the allies' military arrangements were as mismanaged as was possible—which is saying much in a peninsular campaign. At Almanza the allied army was destroyed, and Spain had announced her own choice of king in no uncertain voice. Yet Spain was, after all, an unimportant field of action. The decision lay on the Belgian frontier, where decision had lain so often before and was found so often afterwards, but during 1707 no decision was reached. A new army seemed to be about to take Europe in reverse, and all the operations of the allies were paralysed until he had declared himself. This was Charles XII of Sweden, who was moving his army menacingly into north Germany. Rumour ran that he was thinking of raising the Protestant north against Austria, and the prestige of the victories he had already gained and the solid mass of his army gave a point to rumour which could not be denied. Marlborough had to leave his Flanders command to hasten to Alt Ranstadt and induce the berserker monarch to turn his attention elsewhere—against Poland, Russia, anywhere so long as he did not interfere with Austria. It is not in the province of this book to discuss whether or not Marlborough diverted Charles from his object, or whether Charles was originally set on attacking Russia. Suffice it to say that by the time Charles had set off on the

march which was to lead to Pultowa and in the end to Frederikshald, the summer was well advanced, and the rest of it was wasted while Marlborough, spent with illness, repaired the breaches in the coalition wrought by Louis's diplomacy, in heart-breaking arbitration between the various generals with whom he had to co-operate, and in desperate political struggles with his enemies in England.

Throughout that year a weary King in Versailles was rising to greater and greater heights of energy and leadership, sitting in day-long conferences in the council hall, toiling all the evening in Mme de Maintenon's room with his ministers and secretaries, struggling to raise money, organizing a kind of conscription in the northern provinces, setting the shaken war ministry to rights, planning a descent by the Old Pretender upon the coasts of Scotland, patching and repairing the fabric which seemed to be crumbling round him. Those words which *no* contemporary authority attributes to him, 'I am the State', were truer now than they had ever been.

Vendôme was sent to command in the Netherlands, that strange contradiction of a man, at once filthy and gallant, sluggish and fiery, weak and determined. He was a sound commander, with plenty of laurels already gained; nominally superior to him, but strictly enjoined to take his advice, was the Duke of Burgundy, the Dauphin's eldest son. The system of having a nominal and an actual commander-in-chief has worked well on occasions, but it is always a possible source of trouble, and on this occasion trouble was found in plenty.

At first Vendôme had some success. Belgium, on Marlborough's conquest, had been handed over to the tender mercies of Dutch governors. Dutch and Bel-

gians could never agree—as was found during 1815 to 1830—the more so as now the Dutch were bent on wringing some of the overwhelming cost of the war from the conquered provinces. Belgium seethed with revolt, and on Vendôme's advance town after town opened their gates to him. Vendôme moved from triumph to triumph, but Eugene came up from the Moselle, and joined hands with Marlborough, and together they rushed across from the Dyle to the Scheldt. Beyond Oudenarde the two armies came into collision, in an encounter-battle of the most typical sort; but whereas the partnership of Marlborough and Eugene had been productive of energetic strategy and most determined tactics, Vendôme and Burgundy had been issuing contradictory orders and exhibiting considerable vacillation. The two armies were thrown into action piecemeal. A rash order issued by Burgundy exposed the French right and gave Marlborough an opportunity of the kind he could use best. The French right was turned; an infantry battle of the sternest kind was fought out to a finish, and, just as night fell, the French were driven in rout from the field. Nine thousand prisoners and ninety colours bore witness to the magnitude of the victory, whose subsequent fruits were the re-conquest of the unhappy Netherlands, the rupture of the French lines, and the appearance of the allied army upon the sacred soil of France itself.

It was now that Marlborough proposed to end the war at a blow. He could spare the men to mask the fortresses and push straight on for Paris. He was confident that he could defeat any army which France could raise in opposition, and he was very probably right—although it is possible, when the national uprising of the next year is remembered, that he would

not have been able to crush the country into submission. But even Eugene hesitated at the proposal, while the Dutch authorities were struck with horror at the bare idea. All the lessons of war since Louvois had first gained power went to prove, to their minds, that an army dare not leave any fortress at all untaken if the latter could in any way menace its communications. All the French fortresses of the frontier must be taken before any further advance could be made. Marlborough chafed and argued, but the Dutch were stubborn, and Marlborough's political position, despite all his victories and achievements, was steadily weakening, so that he could not command peremptory orders from London. He fell reluctantly into agreement with Eugene, and sat down to besiege Lille.

The news of Oudenarde came as a terrible blow to Versailles. All France was exhausted and depressed. There was a panic throughout the country when it became known that Dutch and Austrian light cavalry was sweeping through the northern provinces levying contributions, and that a raiding body of horse actually had the audacity to make a daring attempt to capture the Dauphin while he was hunting at Sèvres. Louis, in dignified despair, sent envoys to the Hague to find out what terms the allies would grant him; he was prepared to make enormous sacrifices, from the filling up of Dunkirk Harbour to cessions on the basis of the Peace of Westphalia. The allies, however, went further still. They demanded the abandonment of Louis's one staunch and honourable ally, the Elector of Bavaria, and, with insane extravagance, the assistance of Louis himself to dethrone his grandson in Spain. It was a demand Louis could not grant honourably, and the war continued. Perhaps Louis could not be blamed—although it is pitiful to remember

the sufferings caused to Europe through his refusal to dispossess his grandson, although he had been making war most of his life upon cousins and brothers-in-law.

Boufflers held out in Lille month after month. The city was the *chef-d'œuvre* of Vauban, and the richest prize of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, but in the end it was forced to yield. Boufflers gave up the citadel by an honourable capitulation in December, and for his tenacity was made duke and marshal by Louis—even an unsuccessful action went some way towards regilding France's tarnished laurels. The fall of the city determined Louis to a last effort at peace. He was lavish in his offers of territory ; he promised to withhold all support from his grandson ; he even offered to subsidize the allies while they were engaged on the campaigns necessary to dethrone him. But the allies, bent on his complete humiliation (Louis was paying now for his gestures of contempt), demanded his active military assistance, and that Louis would not grant. ' If I must fight, I will fight my enemies and not my own children,' said Louis, and he put himself at the head of his people.

It was now that Louis rose to greater heights than ever before or after. He condescended to issue a circular explaining to his wretched people the reasons which compelled him to continue the war, and pointing out the magnitude of the offers he had made. He taxed the property of his cherished nobility, he slaved night and day in his cabinet to find men and money and munitions, he tried to forget his royal dignity in his urgent appeals to his people, and France responded. The spring of 1709 brought in a spell of bitter cold following on a mild winter, and the year's harvest was ruined. Corn was scanty and meat was unobtainable—the cattle had been slaughtered long before.

The peasantry starved in the fields ; money was never seen ; the whole French civilization seemed to be breaking down into a condition like that of the Stone Age. But Louis's months of labour had set a new army in the field, with Villars at its head—Boufflers's prolonged resistance in Lille had given him time for that—and throughout northern France the peasants who had not been swept into the ranks were out with weapons in their hands carrying on a guerilla warfare with the allied detachments. Marlborough was proceeding systematically with the reduction of the French fortresses. Tournay fell to him after a costly siege, and Mons was invested. Villars moved against him with ninety thousand men (the fact that Louis, in 1709, was able to raise, equip, and train ninety thousand men must surely be ranked as a colossal achievement) and challenged action. The dilatoriness of the Dutch deputies gave him two days in which to entrench himself before Marlborough attacked—and nowadays we all know what it costs to attack entrenchments of two days' elaboration. Marlborough had to send his men to assault a position defended by marshes, by abattis and palisades, by a mass of artillery both heavy and light, and by equal numbers commanded by the two most determined generals of France. The attack was beaten back repeatedly. Eugene was wounded in the head, and the allies, appalled by the slaughter, might have abandoned the struggle but for Marlborough's desperate determination. He kept up the attack by sheer force of personality, and in the end the allies' final effort broke through the lines of entrenchments. There was no pursuit, for the French Household Cavalry redeemed their reputation by a wild charge which broke even the steadiness of the Prussian horse. Boufflers (Villars had been wounded

early in the day, and, after trying to direct the battle while sitting on a chair, had been carried fainting from the field) drew off his men in good order. Ten thousand Frenchmen had fallen, but the allies were left to brood over a casualty list twenty thousand strong—a frightful price to pay for Mons and Tournay.

Malplaquet, the bloodiest battle until Borodino, may be considered to have been decisive not merely of the close of the war but of many battles later. It was the memory of Malplaquet which held the French firm thirty years later at Fontenoy—and at the same battle it was the memory of Malplaquet which held back the Dutch from delivering the attack asked of them. To the desperate French people a battle in which the French had not been routed and in which the dreaded Marlborough had suffered such frightful loss was as good as a victory. The national uprising flamed on the instant into a dangerous movement.

The casualty lists startled the authorities in London and the Hague. War as costly as this could not be considered profitable. Marlborough's position was weakened still further, and from then on he laboured under the fear of imminent recall—a state of affairs which was hardly likely to encourage him to take risks. He went on with his sieges; Douai, Bethune, and Aire fell to him in turn after prolonged resistance. Villars and the guerillas hampered him, and he dared not risk another Malplaquet. His duchess had long since lost the last shreds of royal favour, and the Opposition was even now gathering all its strength for his overthrow.

Louis struggled on through 1710, directing the fortification of the northern towns and forwarding to Villars the handfuls of money and men he was able to collect, trying vainly to come to some sort of terms

not too dishonourable with his enemies. Charles of Austria's fortunes seemed to be once more in the ascendant ; his Catalonians stood by him and he once more occupied Madrid in Philip's place. But at this juncture Louis's arms had a gleam of success, for Vendôme, the defeated of Oudenarde, led the Castilians with better fortune and won the crowning mercy of Villa Viciosa, whereby all Spain save Catalonia was brought back under Philip's control.

And then, soon after this final proof of the Spaniards' choice of a monarch, relief came. The Emperor died without sons, and his brother Charles—the *soi-disant* Charles III of Spain—succeeded him. The allies now were fighting to seat the Austrian ruler on the throne of Spain and the Indies—a revival of the empire of Charles V which bade fair to be as troublesome as the union of France and Spain. All heart was taken out of the allies' efforts ; not only that, but Eugene and the Imperial troops were recalled from Flanders to Frankfort to overawe the Imperial election and to ensure the nomination of Charles as his Imperial, Royal, and Apostolic Majesty. Marlborough, weaker than ever, still continued his gradual subjugation of France, but Villars's army was actually stronger now than was his. Despite of this Marlborough broke through his boasted '*Ne plus ultra*' lines and laid siege to Bouchain, hoping against hope that next year Eugene would return and together they would march on Paris. But when Eugene returned no Marlborough was there to meet him. The Tories had triumphed at St. James's and Marlborough had been dismissed with ignominy from all his offices. France was saved. Swift's pen and the bad temper of the duchess defended Paris from Marlborough more effectively than Villars's skill or Louis's labour.

Prior the poet (at least, he was thought to be a poet) had already appeared semi-officially at Versailles, and in conference with the King the main terms of peace had been fairly well defined when the ministers began to assemble at Utrecht. The English government was sick of the war—had been, in fact, returned to power largely in order to make peace, and technically they were justified in their desertion of their allies in consequence of the failure of the Dutch to provide their full quota of men and money for several years. As long as they could make a fair bargain for England they did not much mind what happened otherwise ; Louis, in addition, was prepared to be generous to England—to buy her off, in fact, just as he did Savoy—so as to free his hands to attack his main enemy, Austria. So that England retained Gibraltar and Minorca, with the consequent dominion over the Mediterranean she desired, along with various American provinces ; she was granted various commercial privileges ; and Dunkirk, the harbour whence had sailed Jean Bart and Duguay-Trouin and hundreds of less distinguished corsairs, was to be dismantled. The crown of Spain was left to Philip, who, it must be admitted, had really earned it. Whether or no the credit is to be given to the advisers Louis found for him this first of the Bourbon Kings of Spain was certainly the most successful. He had won his kingdom by the sword, and boldly announced his intention of keeping it regardless of whether France continued to support him—and Almanza and Villa Viciosa showed that it would be a bloody and costly business to dispossess him. So he was allowed to stay, on condition of his making a solemn renunciation of his claims on the French throne ; the best legal opinion in France was inclined to the belief that renunciation was

impossible and void from the first, but the difficulty was ignored.

With England bought off, at some little cost to her honour (the Catalans, for instance, were abandoned to Philip's vengeance), Louis could now turn his attention to those of his enemies who still were posted within French territory. Villars's army was reinforced; French credit having recovered a little, enough money was found to render his forces mobile, and Louis sent him pressing orders to take the offensive. Fortune was on his side. The Dutch were flung into the Scheldt at Denain, their base was captured, and a whole series of fortresses fell to the French, while Eugene could only view their progress helplessly. Denain forced the Dutch to come to terms; the Empire followed them, and Austria, perforce, came into line. Chance, skilful diplomacy, and tireless exertions had between them pulled Louis from the mire. Peace was made on the basis of the Treaty of Ryswick, five years after Louis had offered terms on the basis of the Treaty of Westphalia.

As ever, it was the Spanish kingdom which found the 'compensations' (that blessed word) which satisfied all the contending powers. Austria received the Netherlands and Naples, Savoy received Sicily; Prussia received Gelderland and was thus established in the Rhine valley as a jailer over France. Spain granted England some of the trading privileges in South America for which she clamoured. On the Continent, France yielded hardly anything territorially; even her last acquisition, Strasbourg, remained in her possession. France and Prussia were being drawn together in the manner which made the collisions of 1806 and 1870 and 1914 inevitable.

France had lost little territory, but she had lost

everything else. Her prestige could not survive Blenheim and Ramillies and Oudenarde. Not merely were her finances ruined, but she had lost her place at the very start in the race for wealth which had just begun—England had now obtained so long a start that there was little chance of overtaking her. She had expended millions of money and thousands (millions, perhaps) of lives, had ruined a promising commerce and a powerful internal development solely that her King might have the privilege of selecting who should be king of a dismembered Spain. Even Louis, in his heart of hearts, did not think it was worth it.

CHAPTER XVII

THE LAST CHAPTER

THE King was nearly eighty, and his wife was older than he. The peasants in the fields earned, when they were lucky, seven *sous* a day, of which the tax-gatherers took three. The wolves came down from the forests and swarmed in the plains, so that even the great Louis, the privileged despot, had to discard one of his most cherished privileges and grant to commoners permission to kill the brutes. In his palace everything was dreary and solemn and mournful. Death had laid a heavy hand on the great house of Bourbon. In 1711 had died Louis's only son, the Dauphin, distinguished only for his prowess in the hunting field. Then in 1712 the new Dauphin's wife, the light of the palace, had gone down with scarlet fever. The infection was borne to her husband and to her eldest son, and soon all three were in their coffins. The poor old King, tottering from his lever to Mass, was beset on his way by a train of howling lackeys, who besought him not to turn them, now that their employers were dead, from the cold comfort of Versailles into the freezing torment of the outer world. The Duke of Burgundy (*le petit Dauphin*) had been the beloved pupil of Fénelon, in the days before the publication of *Telemaque* had driven the latter into the retirement of his archbishopric. Report had made him out to be a larger, greater Louis XIV—a man of more flexibility of mind, of more ready temper, of less bigoted religion. Report had run that Louis had even been jealous of him, but later report said more accurately that the two were

reconciled and that the duke had won a place in the old man's senile affections. The duchess he had loved like a daughter—she was the one element of brightness in a court darkened by the shadow of Ramillies and Malplaquet and by the taxation of noble property. Louis's heir was a sickly great-grandchild, whose life only and that of his uncle (also fated to die within a few months) stood between the throne and the hated Orleans.

The old splendour of the court was gone. The King still held his lever and his coucher, still received his shirt with due solemnity from the grand chamberlain, but the glitter and fever and brilliance had departed with the wealth they had dissipated. Canny courtiers, too, were inclining towards Orleans—his receptions were beginning to be crowded despite Louis's avowed hatred, for men saw that he would be a power in the land on the demise of the Crown. Many and many were the weary evenings spent in the chamber of Madame la Marquise de Maintenon—she in her ingle-nook, huddled in her high-backed chair in terror of draughts, wearying her shaking fingers and her bleared eyes over her needlework, he at his desk with a bewildered minister at his side, racking his old man's brains to find remedies for the ills his weaknesses had brought upon the country. Formulae were found, but even Louis did not believe them to be remedies. Edicts appeared, drafted by the wavering royal pen, prohibiting the sowing of spring corn, increasing road tolls, promising non-existent bounties to impossible industries; but no edict, and especially no edict planned by Louis and carried out by the ministers he selected, could heal France of her wounds.

He was very, very weary and a little disillusioned, although enough of the old kingly temper remained to

carry him through the stale daily farce of the royal functions. He could still eat heartily, mumbling the lavish foods with toothless jaws. He still cherished a doddering, old man's passion for the marquise, so that at her word he could blot out Port Royal and all the beautiful ideals for which it stood ; although he was conscious of a troubled knowledge that she was sadly weary, not merely of the court, but of the King, and longing for the serene and autocratic retirement of St. Cyr.

Those about the court who were too deeply imbued with the traditions of the past to realize the absurdity of the business (and they were many) regarded the approaching end with horror. To them the death of Louis, the Sun King, meant a perpetual eclipse, an end of everything—the end of the world as well as the end of an era. They would even have been willing to make substantial sacrifices had such availed to prolong this last act—this epilogue, rather—of the tragedy. They remembered the great days when a Persian ambassador had come to pay his respects to the greatest king in the world. Perhaps a similar function would help to rouse Louis's interest and give a new gleam to the dying glory. So a Siamese ambassador—the first representative of his kingdom to arrive in Europe—presented himself in Paris, and was conducted to Versailles. He came, bowing low, to the foot of the wonderful staircase, and the old King tottered to the head to receive him ; he had put on his coat of cloth of gold with the seams sewn with diamonds, although its weight was a sore trial to his feeble limbs. The ambassador of Siam paid his respects and retired duly dazzled by the royal refulgence—retired into the obscurity whence he had come, for he was no more of an ambassador than any of the

other stray orientals to be found in Paris. He had brought a little interest into a day of Louis's life, however.

The Marquise de Maintenon remained at his side, as was her duty, although he would not, although she still wished it, make a public declaration of their marriage. At a time when the ministries of state were starved for money there was always money to be found for her college of St. Cyr. She had learned how to guide the King's thought in the requisite direction, but it was a weary business, and she had had to be so tactful all her life that now in her old age it was an added strain. All the time the Jesuit party was urging her to induce the King to adopt some new or additional religious policy, and although she yielded to them a little for the sake of her soul, it was unwillingly. She was tired of the King, tired of everything, and Louis guessed it; and the two of them still had to drag on together through the last years of their lives, for Maintenon was indispensable—she was the link between the French King and the unofficial representative at the Court of Madrid, the First Lady of the Court, who was a French noblewoman, with whom, of course, Louis could hardly carry on an official correspondence.

Louis had always been a healthy subject—a 'good life'. Save for his dangerous illness just before he took over the reins of power, and for a prolonged lesion, much more irritating and undignified than dangerous, which was finally set right by operation in 1686, Louis was hardly ever even unwell, and those about him could never believe in his approaching end—there was, in fact, no particular reason why he should not live another dozen years.

But the heirs and relatives were watching anxiously.

The death of the Duke of Berry in 1714 left only two legitimate male descendants of Louis XIV—the Duke of Anjou, who was only a child, and a sickly one at that, and Philip, King of Spain, who had renounced the succession. Under these conditions it was likely that there would be fierce competition for power on Louis's death. The other branches of the royal house had, by Louis's order, been every one rejoined to the main stem by marriages with his illegitimate descendants. The first prince of the blood outside Louis's sons was Philip, Duke of Orleans, for whom both Louis and Mme de Maintenon cherished a bitter hatred, the former presumably on account of jealousy of his undoubted talents, and the latter because he was a loose liver and suspected of free-thinking. Nevertheless the royal authority had compelled a marriage between the Duc de Chartres (as he then was) with Mlle de Blois, the daughter of Louis and Mme de Montespan, despite the furious opposition of his father and mother, to say nothing of his own distaste. The first Mlle de Blois (Mme de la Vallière's daughter) was married to the Prince of Conti, of the younger line of the house of Condé; Mlle de Nantes, another of Louis's daughters by Montespan, was married to the Duc de Bourbon, the junior prince of the blood. The blending of the legitimate and illegitimate lines was finally sealed by the marriage of the Duc du Maine, Louis's son by Montespan, with Mlle de Charolais, a princess of Condé. It must also not be forgotten that all Louis's children by La Vallière and Montespan had been legitimated by royal edict, registered under compulsion by the Parliament of Paris; and not merely that, but various other illegitimate offspring of the house of Bourbon had been legitimated also, so that the first Duke of Vendôme, son of Henry IV,

found himself a prince of the blood some fifty years after his death.

Louis, urged on both by Mme de Maintenon and by his jealousy of the house of Orleans, was determined to carry this process of legitimization as far as it would go. His sons the Duc du Maine and the Comte de Toulouse were declared to be in the line of succession, to the consequent exclusion of Orleans—a declaration which might, in certain circumstances, have left France a fearful legacy of civil war. But Louis was only a feeble old man, with an old man's whims and prejudices, and the Duc du Maine was a sly and subtle courtier who was too ready and willing to play Jacob to Louis's Isaac; the Jesuit party in the court, too, hating and fearing the Jansenist movement, and mistrusting Orleans' easygoing tolerance, combined to urge the King, both directly and through his wife, to do all he could to keep Orleans out of power. He made his will, but even Louis had misgivings as he made it. Orleans was to be placated by the presidency of the Council of Regency without a shadow of power; all the executive authority of the kingdom was to be concentrated in the hands of Maine and the Jesuits. Louis, looking back through history, saw how his father's will and his grandfather's will before him had been set aside, and he had his doubts (which proved in the end to be well founded) as to whether even the will of Louis le Grand would be upheld. But nothing mattered much now; all he wanted was peace and a cessation of the prying and entreaties of the father confessors who clustered round his dying body. Nothing really mattered—not even the establishment of the Protestant succession in England, not even the planning of the Old Pretender's expedition to Scotland.

He tottered on bravely, but with increasing weariness.

ness, through all the worldly maze of lever and diner and coucher, still saying and doing the correct thing under the eye of the sombre courtiers of that sombre court, witnessing day by day the defection of more and more of the nobility to the party of Orleans, realizing more and more acutely how his wife yearned for the end of all the pathetic business, but making no complaint and seeing the business through with all his old kingly dignity.

And then it became known that the King was sick ; directly afterwards the rumour sped through the *salons* of Versailles that senile gangrene had made its appearance, and even the medical knowledge of that era knew now that the end was only a few days off. The Jesuits began to muster their forces ; the trimmers began to try to decide which party to back ; and Mme de Maintenon would not risk, on the King's death, an undignified expulsion from court. She retired forthwith to St. Cyr, the haven which she had planned so cannily, relieved and self-centred. Only a few last faithful spirits remained round the King while the gangrene made its steady progress upward to his heart. He asked for the little Dauphin, and they brought him, a scared, weeping boy, and Louis took him and made to him his last confession in that shadow of death which renders even kings human : ' I have been too fond of war,' said Louis, and more, much more, besides. The approach of death compelled that self-examination and self-humiliation which had been so long deferred. Very humbly Louis said his last *confiteor* and offered a few timid words of advice to the frightened little boy who could hardly hear what he was saying. Then he reproached, with kingly mildness, the weeping servants round him ; his death should not be such a shock to them. He had expected

it for so long that he could view the future with an even mind ; it ought to be the same in their case.

The light at last flickered out on 1 September 1715, when the King was within a few days of his seventy-eighth year. And of course his funeral was not as brilliant as his life ; nor was his people as desolated by their loss as the panegyrics of his lifetime might have led one to expect ; and his will was set aside before even he was in his grave.

